

A STUDY ON THE PRC-DPRK ALLIANCE: FOCUSING ON
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALLIANCE

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General Studies

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY ON THE PRC-DPRK ALLIANCE: FOCUSING ON HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALLIANCE, by Major Dongchan Lee, 126 pages.

The PRC-DPRK alliance has shown strong resiliency during the past six decades despite numerous challenges both within and outside the bilateral relations. The last nuclear test conducted by North Korea in early 2013 has brought the relations to a nadir. It is difficult to assess the current state of affairs between China and the DPRK; however, one aspect that is certain is that it has fundamentally changed in contrast to their old relationship during the Cold War period.

The purpose of this study is to predict how changes in the bilateral relationship between China and the DPRK will affect the international security environment in the near future and suggest the implications for ROK's national security based on historical analysis. In this study, there are several key periods (strengthened and weakened junctures) in the PRC-North Korea alliance from the Kim Il-sung era to the Kim Jong-eun era, which will be examined using the historical comparative analysis perspective in order to assess the continuities and discontinuities of PRC-DPRK alliance in the future.

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ACRONYMS

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPVA	Chinese People Volunteer Army
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
KWP	Korean Workers Party
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

A strengthened China-DPRK friendship is . . . vital to the economic and social development of both countries in the 21st century. China needs peace and stability along its border, in order to ensure its rapid modernization. Likewise, the DPRK needs China's cooperation, in order to press ahead with its socialist construction. Since both countries need each other for these economic and social purposes, stronger bilateral relations are inevitable.

— Andrew Scobell, “China and North Korea”

Past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide for the future.

— Mao Zedong, “A New Page in the Annals of Sino-Japanese Relations”

In modern history, China was strongly present in the Korean Peninsula, which witnessed a host of major events after the ending of World War II in 1945 and the period that followed, known as the Cold War. This was because the Korean Peninsula formed one of the most important confrontation areas between two camps; the eastern camp led by the Soviet Union and the Western camp led by America. Hence, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two parts; North followed the eastern camp and South followed the Western camp. Although the Soviet Union was leading the Eastern Bloc, which included the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) led by the Korean Workers Party (KWP), China held, and continues to hold, the greatest influence over North Korea.

The China-DPRK relationship remains the most enduring, uninterrupted bilateral friendship for both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the DPRK. Yet, the relationship between China and DPRK surely ranks as one of world's strangest. On the surface, it might not seem surprising to have a formal military alliance between two

communist neighbors that has endured more than six decades; after all their armed forces fought shoulder-to-shoulder in the Korean War sixty-five years ago. Sharing a common border and ideology, both China and the DPRK confront the frustration of divided nations.

The PRC-DPRK Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty signed on 11 July 1961 has been the consistent connection of the two countries; it had an important role in the development of the relationship during the Cold War. However, at the end of the Cold War, the two countries were pursuing different development trajectories, and the treaty's status in their relations was weakening rapidly. Although Chinese President Hu Jintao and the DPRK leader Kim Jong-il vowed to further strengthen ties between the two states in an exchange of letters without the normal lavish commemoration parade by the event in Beijing and Pyongyang,¹ since the end of Cold War, the PRC-DPRK "blood-shared alliance" has been branded as a "relic of a bygone age," and some Chinese officers even argued for scrapping the treaty and treating North Korea as a "normal" state.²

¹ Hu's letter said that "it is the firm strategic policy of the CCP and the Chinese government to steadily consolidate and develop PRC-DPRK friendly and cooperative relations. The Yonhap News Agency, "North Korea-China Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Friendship Treaty," *North Korea News Letter*, no. 166 (14 July 2011), accessed 23 March 2015, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2011/07/13/35/0401000000AEN20110713009500325F.HTML>.

² The People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," 11 July 1961, trans. Max B. and Mike B., *Peking Review* 4, no. 28 (4 May 1962): 5, accessed 15 September 2015, https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm.

In 2009, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman clarified that the relation of China and DPRK is the “normal state relationship.”³ After that, issues of the termination of the treaty have never officially released. By not referring the treaty’s effectiveness to the two governments, the treaty appears to be a firmly effective alliance by the obligation bond. However, in considering China’s policy toward the DPRK which has been presented up until now, this conclusion could be seen as the overly simplistic one. In this sense, what is the meaning of PRC-DPRK Treaty of 1961 in relations between the two countries, as well as to the security of the Korean Peninsula and East Asia? This very important issue is worth discussing.

After DPRK’s third nuclear test in February 2013, researches and discussions as to China and DPRK relations boomed. Most discussions of their relations emphasized that after Kim Jong-il’s several visits to China and the Summit of two countries on 25 May 2011, the prospect for bilateral relations focused mainly on economic cooperation rather than political and military ties. In particular, under the situation of deepening the DPRK’s economic dependence on the China, this trend could be connected with the political and military dependence on China; and consequently, it would be an impediment to the development of inter-Korean relations in the short-term, and the reunification issue in the end.

Historically, China and DPRK have maintained a close relationship in using the term of lips and teeth based on shared historical experiences such as anti-Japanese armed

³ Zhu Feng(朱鋒), “PRC-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty and the ROK-U.S. Alliance” (Report, Institute for National Security Strategy, Seoul, September 2011), 33.

struggle and the Korean War. In addition to the geographical proximity, cultural similarities and ideological affinities were main factors to maintain their friendly relationship.

However, as mentioned before, it is difficult to assess the current state of affairs between China and the DPRK. However, one aspect that is certain is that it has fundamentally changed in contrast to their old relationship. For example, since the 1992 Korea-China diplomatic relation normalization, and in 2006 and 2013, DPRK ignored the warning of China and conducted missile launches and nuclear tests. Since 2005, China has conducted joint training five times with Russia, which has not been part of an alliance, to strengthen military ties with Russia.⁴ This fact could be an example of weakening of the PRC-DPRK alliance in comparison with the Cold War period.

Additionally, in recent years intellectual and public opinions of China have gradually supported a critical approach to the DPRK, and begun to recognize them as a strategic burden. In the past, China viewed the DPRK with a sympathetic and supporting attitude, in order to coexist in harmony with the international community.⁵ Moreover, China strengthened its diplomatic, economic, and cultural relationships with neighboring states, including the two Koreas, Southeast Asian states, India, and Pakistan in pursuit of

⁴ Jane Perlez, "China and Russia, in a Display of Unity, Hold Naval Exercises," *New York Times*, 10 July 2013, accessed 15 October 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/11/world/asia/china-and-russia-in-a-display-of-unity-hold-naval-exercises.html?_r=1.

⁵ Myeong-hae Choi, "Prospects for China's North Korea Strategy in the Post-Kim Jong-il Era and Implications for South Korea," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 46.

China's strategic goal of establishing friendly relationships with its neighbors at the cost of the U.S. influence over the region.⁶

Recently DPRK's new young leader, Kim Jong-eun, made a series of provocations. North Korea conducted the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, raising alarm and tension in the region. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) immediately passed Resolution 2094, imposing stricter sanctions upon North Korea. North Korea regarded UNSC sanctions as a declaration of war. It scrapped all previous agreements made with South Korea, including the 1972 joint declaration, 2000 and 2007 summit agreements, and armistice agreement.⁷ It continues to raise tension by disconnecting the military hot-line in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which serves as the only means of communication between the North and South Korea militaries. In addition on 9 April 2013, Pyongyang barred access to Kaesong Industrial Complex, which served as the last bastion of inter-Korean relations.⁸ North Korea did not stop with only provoking South Korea, but also included its ally, the United States. North Korea declared the joint military exercise between the United States and South Korea military

⁶ Sukhee Han, "China's 'Peaceful Development' and Its Implications on Korea," *Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 177.

⁷ The armistice agreement was the only legal document concluding the end of hostile arms conflict on the Korean Peninsula. The armistice agreement was signed by UN Command, North Korea, and PRC in July 1953. It only contained agreements relating to cease-fire and fixing military demarcation between ROK and DPRK. It is not a peace treaty, thus technically and legally the Korean Peninsula is still under the state of war.

⁸ The Kaesong Industrial Complex was established in 2002 as part of the agreement made during the 2000 inter-Korean Summit Meeting between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong-il. After the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island incident in 2010, President Lee Myung Bak stopped all inter-Korean trade and aid to North Korea. The Kaesong Industrial Complex was the only remaining place where both Korea work together.

an indication of imminent attack. North Korea promised a pre-emptive nuclear attack directed toward U.S. bases in South Korea, Japan, and Guam, and mainland United States. North Korea's brinkmanship behavior raised the alarm of all the regional players including its long standing ally, China. As the saying goes that China-North Korea relations is as closed as lips and teeth, but now the lips are sore. How will China deal with the increasingly untamed behavior of North Korea? China is now faced with an unprecedented event and important critical juncture in China-North Korea alliance and relations.

Research Question and Purpose of the Study

The primary question this study raises is: How will changes in the bilateral relationship between China and the DPRK effect the international security environment and Republic of Korea (ROK) national security? These secondary questions will be addressed: First, what has been the basis for maintaining the PRC-DPRK relations of the past sixty-four years? Second, what primary factors have been affected on changing the PRC-DPRK alliance from the Kim Il-sung era to the Kim Jong-eun era? Third, are there any indications for future change to current PRC-DPRK relations?

The objective of this study is to predict how changes in the bilateral relationship between China and the DPRK will affect the international security environment in the near future and suggest the implications for ROK's national security based on historical analysis. In this study, there are several key periods (strengthened and weakened junctures) in the PRC-North Korea alliance from the Kim Il-sung era to the Kim Jong-eun era, which will be examined using the historical comparative analysis perspective in order to assess the continuities and discontinuities of PRC-DPRK alliance in the future.

Significance of the Study

China's influence on East Asia has existed since ancient times; this impact has been political, economic, or cultural in nature. Nonetheless, this impact varies according to the circumstances of the world and the particular region being affected, as well as according to the circumstances relating to China and Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Korean Peninsula has been one of the areas most affected by China's influence due to several factors, particularly geographic and cultural.

China has continued to rise politically despite the collapse of the Soviet Union. This rise may be attributed to its economic, human, and military strength, which may certainly cast a shadow on East Asia, particular in the Korean Peninsula.⁹ China still maintains a strong influence on the Korean Peninsula; politicians and observers cannot imagine any change to the status of Korea without China's intervention directly to mapping the future of the Korean Peninsula.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Chinese have traditionally played a role in the Korean Peninsula with their known support for North Korea at the expense of the South, for ideological and geopolitical reasons as well as national security. Therefore, many people place the blame on China for North Korea's

⁹ Jisi Wang, *China's Changing Role in Asia, The Rise of China and a Changing East Asian Order*, eds. Kukubun Ryosei and Jisi Wang (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2004), 8.

¹⁰ BBC News, "US Commander Urges China to Act on North Korea," 8 December 2010, accessed 18 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11945131>.

“reckless” action, which China has backed on many issues, and actions toward its neighbor South Korea.¹¹

There is no doubt that without China’s support to the DPRK in many periods and crises, the situation in North Korea would be completely different. This support, which has taken various forms, did not begin with the sending of arms and Chinese volunteers to Korea during Korean War (1950-1953), and did not end with the economic support supplied to North Korea.¹² Rather, this support has existed through the provision of international political cover to the DPRK in international forums and sheltering Korean refugees within the Chinese border;¹³ furthermore, China is considered the only window to the world for the DPRK.

Furthermore, any decision made by China holds significant influence on not only North Korea, but also on South Korea. China has managed to maintain a good relationship with the ROK while simultaneously strengthening its relationship with North Korea.¹⁴ This gives it a unique position to play an important role in the Korean Peninsula;

¹¹ Gill Bates, “China’s North Korea Policy: Assessing Interests and Influence” (Report, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 2011), 5.

¹² Camilla T. N. Sorensen, “China’s Role in East Asia, Exam” (Paper, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 2010), 6.

¹³ Ming Lui, *China’s Role in the Course of North Korea’s Transition, A New International Engagement Framework for North Korea?* ed. Ahn Choong-yong (Washington, DC: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2004), 3.

¹⁴ Roy Denny, “China and the Korean Peninsula, Beijing’s Pyongyang Problem and Seoul Hope,” *Asia-Pacific Center of Security Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004): 2.

even major countries like the United States and other Western countries cannot obtain this unique position.¹⁵

In this context, the most influential actor on the Korean Peninsula has been its immediate neighbor China, which has spread its influence over the peninsula from ancient times, up until today, and will keep exerting its influence in the future, politically, economically, and militarily. Therefore, this study is significant for the ROK government. Analyzing and understanding this very special PRC-DPRK relationship and its development, will help the ROK government to prepare better foreign and defense policy toward to North Korea, China, and the United States in the near future.

Thesis Layout

This thesis falls into seven chapters. The first chapter has introduced the subject of this thesis, exploring the background of the problems posed for the research, and has initiated research questions, and further purpose of studying the PRC-DPRK alliance with the emphasis on the significance of this study. Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter reviews the most relevant existing literature in order to fully comprehend the PRC-DPRK alliance and predict the future of the region.

The third chapter provides methodological foundations of the study and scope posed by the research process. The most appropriate theory to use in this thesis that would aid in comprehending this topic could then be determined.

Chapters 4 through 6 provide a detailed analysis of the PRC-DPRK alliance focusing on critical junctures (strengthen and weakened) in each of the three eras (Kim Il-

¹⁵ Bates, 3.

sung, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-eun) that were defined in chapter 3 (methodology and scope).

Lastly, chapter 7 evaluates the continuities and discontinuities of PRC-DPRK alliance based on the analysis of PRC-DPRK's potential benefit and cost if China and North Korea abandon their alliance, in order to estimate the status of PRC-DPRK alliance and effectiveness of their treaty. Based on above comparison, this chapter suggests prospects of future changes in PRC-DPRK alliance and implications on ROK's national security.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The PRC-DPRK alliance has been extensively studied and researched, especially in recent times where research has been in line with the developments that have occurred in the relationship between the two sides and on the events taking place in the Korean Peninsula. Before delving into the details of these developments between the two parties, it is necessary to review the most important findings of previous studies on this subject. In this scholarly literature, there are essentially two main schools of thought on the PRC-DPRK relations. First, some recent scholarly works have speculated that North Korea's recent nuclear provocations constitute an unacceptable threat to China's stability, causing Beijing to consider abandoning North Korea. The second, more traditional school of thought emphasizes China's continued preference for the status quo despite North Korea's recent provocations.

Scholars proposing that China may abandon North Korea state that the DPRK's recent nuclear provocations have crossed a red line of China's patience. They argue that while China has been willing to tolerate past instances of North Korean provocations, North Korea's increasing belligerence has caused Beijing to re-evaluate its relationship with Pyongyang, supporting the regime in Pyongyang has become an increasingly untenable burden for China. Scholars such as Chung Eun-sook,¹⁶ Michael Swaine,¹⁷ and

¹⁶ Eun-sook Chung, "Long-Stalled Six-Party Talks on North Korea's Nuclear Program: Positions of Countries Involved," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 25, no. 1 (March 2013): 1-15.

¹⁷ Michael D. Swain, "China's North Korea Dilemma," *China Leadership Monitor* 30 (November 2009): 1-27.

Choi Myong-hae¹⁸ have taken this view, hypothesizing that China's patience may soon run out with North Korea. While China has yet to abandon North Korea, Beijing's support cannot be taken for granted. The maintenance of the status quo in the DPRK has become a lower priority in light of the destabilizing effect of the North Korean nuclear threat. These scholars speculate that further North Korean provocations could finally lead to China harshly punishing Pyongyang, regardless of the consequences it may have for North Korean regime stability.

According to these scholars, as China tries to promote itself as a peacefully rising world power, continually protecting an increasingly aggressive Pyongyang damages China's image in the world community. While China tries to show the world that it is a responsible power, advocating on behalf of an unruly Pyongyang appears to undercut the legitimacy of China's argument that it is a force for peace and stability in East Asia. Furthermore, an increasingly belligerent DPRK gives the United States and Japan pretext to build up their own missile defense programs, causing instability in the eyes of Beijing. Moreover, as China has close trade ties with both the United States and South Korea; scholars argue that Beijing cannot allow its support of the North Korean regime to harm its relations with these crucial economic partners. Due to these factors, some speculate that the Chinese government has become increasingly weary of supporting Pyongyang, and may be considering a change in its North Korea policy.¹⁹

As North Korea has grown more unstable, it has interfered with China's plans to build a harmonious and prosperous Northeast Asia. The problem caused by an unstable

¹⁸ Myeong-hae Choi, 45-73.

¹⁹ Eun-sok Chung, 7-8.

North Korea has the possibility to not just affect the PRC-KPRK relationship, but they could spread throughout Asia, inhibiting China's strategic goals.²⁰ Following the leadership transition in China, some scholars now speculate that Xi Jinping is more aware than his predecessors of the strategic burdens involved in supporting the regime in Pyongyang. This set of circumstances has led these scholars to predict that Xi Jinping will take a harsher stance on North Korea's provocation, potentially changing traditional Chinese priorities on the Korean Peninsula. While Beijing has traditionally been willing to overlook North Korea's provocations including nuclear development, this new scholarly research speculates that the Xi Jinping administration sees a nuclear North Korea as a threat to Chinese stability. This perception could lead Beijing to re-order its priorities on the Korean Peninsula.

On the other hand, the more traditional school of thought emphasizes that the destabilizing effect of North Korea's recent provocations, while troubling, is not enough to change China's priorities on the Korean Peninsula. These scholars have studied China's preference for maintaining the status quo of Korean division and the perpetuation of the Kim regime in the North. Studies by Shen Dingli,²¹ Zhu Feng,²² Banning Garrett,²³

²⁰ Myeong-hae Choi, 46-47.

²¹ Dingli Shen, "North Korea's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security* 2, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 19-34.

²² Zhu Feng, "Shifting Tides: China and North Korea," *China Security* 2, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 33-51.

²³ Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, "Looking across the Yalu: Chinese Assessments of North Korea," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 6 (June 1995): 528-545.

Nam Jong-ho,²⁴ and Dong Xiangrong²⁵ have all stated that for the time being China sees a continuation of the status quo as being its primary goal on the Korean Peninsula.

Although China is frustrated and concerned by North Korea's nuclear provocations, these scholars argue that China will continue to tolerate North Korea's nuclear program because it fears the destabilizing effects of regime change.

In general, these studies mention the historical relations between the two countries, which Lee Jong-seok²⁶ described as a warm relationship. Nevertheless, Lee notes that the day of brotherly alliance between China and North Korea has already passed. However, he adds that it is difficult to predict whether the political alliance between the two countries will be easily dissolved, because China's most important interest toward North Korea is likely to prevent its collapse. The Chinese leadership is recognizing that the stability of the Korean Peninsula is essential to China's stable economic development by reform and opening-up. Moreover, China acknowledged that its intervention in the Korean War had a huge negative effect on its economy. Furthermore, the Chinese leadership seems to be of the opinion that North Korea's collapse would be a negative risk factor toward the Chinese system.²⁷ These days China's

²⁴ Jong-ho Nam, Jae-woo Choo, and Jang-won Lee, "China's Dilemma on the Korean Peninsula: Not an Alliance but a Security Dilemma," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 25, no. 3 (September 2013): 385-398.

²⁵ Xiangrong Dong, "China's Dilemma on the Korean Peninsula," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 25, no. 2 (June 2013): 243-255.

²⁶ Jong-seok Lee, "Change of China-North Korea Relations and Its Implications from the Historical and Structural Perspective," *Three Kinds of Policy Research* 6 (2010): 468.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

influence on North Korea has in fact increased, because of deepening economic and diplomatic impasses of North Korea. Given that China's economic and diplomatic support to North Korea function as a minimum safety valve for its survival, China's influence on North Korea should not be underestimated.²⁸

David M. Mrosek²⁹ notes that North Korean provocations and nuclear brinkmanship are increasingly threatening regional stability. Beijing fears any war or collapse scenario on the Korean Peninsula and believes the Kim regime to be too entrenched to remove by any other options, thus it prefers to support the status quo in the short-term. Beijing also benefits from North Korea's role as a buffer and as leverage against the U.S. position on Taiwan. In the long-term, Beijing is against reunification for fear that a reunified Korea would maintain close alignment with the United States. While neutrality appears to be a better option, Beijing would still lose the DPRK as a political and military leverage against the U.S. position on Taiwan.³⁰

Both schools of thought have their merits. The ideological and string of human solidarity which has been an important link in China's bilateral relations with the DPRK are now being weakened over time. On the other hand, Stable DPRK's regime is still China's the highest priority policy and China also has expressed indirect support to the DPRK's hereditary succession regime. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the current state

²⁸ Jong-seok Lee, 14.

²⁹ David M. Mrosek, "China and North Korea: A Peculiar Relationship" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2011), 8.

³⁰ Ibid., 27.

of affairs between China and the DPRK; however, one aspect that is certain is that it has fundamentally changed in contrast to their old relationship.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

The historical tie between China and DPRK seems to be weakening considering recent events and many articles have been released which assert China's influence on DPRK is weakened significantly beyond an ideological binding.³¹ However, the strengthening and weakening of alliances are difficult to quantify. Indeed, the loosening of the China and DPRK alliance cannot be defined in terms of traditional metrics (e.g., military cooperation, defense spending, and trade relations) alone. The standard by which to measure this alliance is more appropriately found in historical analysis that encompasses relevant cultural context and conditions of the international security environment. In addition to this, the strengthening and weakening of alliances are difficult to quantify.

In this study, the author will use historical comparative analysis to examine the PRC-DPRK alliance based on identifying the continuities (value factors) and discontinuities (burden factors) of PRC-DPRK alliance focusing on critical junctures (strengthen and weakened). The best approach to explaining the relationship between China and North Korea today is to look at their historical relationship and attempt to use it as an explanatory tool. The author's contribution to the research on the political relationship between China and North Korea will assist in some form to increased understanding of the current and future situation. Moreover, it is the only theoretical approach that seems to be able to explain the core of North Korean politics, because

³¹ Jaewoo Choo, "Mirroring North Korea's Growing Economic Dependence on China: Political Ramifications," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 2 (2008): 370.

North Korean politics are not governed by the same rules that apply to Western politics or those of the rest of the world. Indeed, it is safe to say that it does not follow any other political models in modern history.

Concerning the temporal scope of this study, the PRC-DPRK alliance will be analyzed in three chronological eras: these of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-eun, in order to explain the sequence of strengthened and weakened junctures of each era. The sequences include the period before the establishment of the PRC-DPRK treaty of alliance, the period of establishment or institutional genesis of the alliance treaty, and the period of various phases or punctuations in PRC-DPRK relations.

This study spans the events of sixty-six years, from 1949 to 2015. The author chose the year of 1949 as starting point of the study because China gained its full independence and sovereignty as a state in 1949 thus formal diplomatic and bilateral relations between China and North Korea start in 1949. The study espouses both the diplomatic communication of China and North Korea leaders as the main unit of analysis. The author examines the contingent events, which affect China-North Korea relations particularly after the adoption of the PRC-DPRK alliance treaty. The third nuclear crisis initiated by North Korea in March 2013 will be discussed in order to see the contemporary challenges of the PRC-DPRK treaty and its future prospect. Data to be analyzed was composed of a comprehensive timeline of events, declassified diplomatic cables, policies, conflicts, and other dynamics between North Korea and China regarding the leaders' policy reactions. This study employs a qualitative research analysis. Due to the nature of the chosen subject, research is conducted based on extensive review and examination of secondary data.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF KIM IL-SUNG ERA (1949-1994)

Initial Conditions

This section describes the security setting in Northeast Asia during the Cold War Era and China-North Korea relations before the adoption of PRC-North Korea treaty of alliance as the initial conditions of PRC-DPRK alliance. Early historical events are contingent occurrences that can be explained based on prior events. Early events in the sequence are especially important to final outcomes because a small change in one of these formative events can accumulate over time and resulted in a great deal of effect by the end of the sequence. Historical sociology demonstrates the importance of initial conditions that the order of events makes a difference; and that when things happen within a sequence this effects how they happen

Security Enviroment in Northeast Asia during the Cold War

The end of World War II in Northeast Asia was marked by Japanese defeat and surrender on August 15, 1945, following the atomic bomb attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The world was soon moving toward a bi-polar setting under two giant super powers, the Soviet Union and the United States. Japan's former colonial territories in Northeast Asia were divided by the victors of the war. North Korea was administered by the Soviet Union while the South was taken under the custody of the United States. Both of them sought to implanted their respective ideology, communism, and liberalism, which contradicted each other. North Korea gained independence with the support of the Soviet Union under Kim Il-sung, a young and charismatic leader. His dream was to reunify the

motherland under the banner of Communism. In contrast, South Korea backed by the United States, elected Rhee Syngman, a Harvard University graduate, who was no less ambitious in the idea of unification.

In China, the war of national independence was not over yet. The coalition army of the CCP and the Nationalist Kuomintang lost its common enemy, the Japanese. They fought bloody battles of civil war from 1945 to 1949. Mao managed to defeat the Nationalist army under Chiang Kai-Shek and forced them to retreat to Taiwan. On 1 October 1949, Mao proclaimed the establishment of the PRC. CCP's victory in China completed the transition period from colonialism to the Cold War setting and logic.

After the end of the Korean War (1950-1953), Northeast Asia's security environment was stable and predictable. The armistice agreement in 1953 between the United States, China, and North Korea marked the beginning of the Northeast Asia region entrance into a unique balance of power system. The continental power of the Soviet Union and the PRC were balanced by the U.S.-led coalition of the Northeast Asian littoral powers of Japan, ROK, and Republic of China (Taiwan).³² China and the Soviet Union signed the PRC-Soviet treaty of friendship on 14 February 1950; both countries pledged to help each other in case of third party attack. In response to deter further invasion from the Communists, the liberal camp concluded a similar defense treaty. The United States signed a mutual defense treaty with South Korea on 1 October 1953. Taiwan and Japan soon followed to conclude the mutual defense treaty with the United States in March 1955 and in January 1960. North Korea remained neutral until it

³² Michael, McDevitt, "Northeast Asia Security Environment: Moving Toward A New Reality," Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed 12 January 2015, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/090201_bsa_mcdevitt.pdf.

concluded the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union and China in 1961. The balance created by the alliance systems was stable enough to deter any major war in Northeast Asia.

There are a number of factors, which contributed to the stability in Northeast Asia during the Cold War era. The ultimate factor for stability in the period after the Korean War was a legitimate military balance of power. The military capability or deterrence of each side was able to trump any attempt by the other side to intrude in a militarily significant way into its domain. Deterrence was also more robust when conquest is more difficult. Potential aggressor states are given pause by the patent futility of attempts at expansion or invasion. On the continent, the Soviet Union and China were safe from invasion, thanks to their large armies, vast territories, and nuclear weapons. Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea were safe from invasion and maritime blockade thanks to U.S. maritime power and nuclear umbrella. Nuclear weapons capability to produce horrendous devastation if used and the promise of mutually assured destruction significantly increased the deterrence capability of both sides.³³

PRC-DPRK Bilateral Relation

During the Chinese Civil War in 1946-1949, North Korea provided great assistance toward the CCP through its Northeast Bureau in Pyongyang. The Chinese Civil War also placed a significance impact on the fate of the Korean Peninsula.³⁴ North

³³ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," *The Atlantic online* (August 1990), accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/politics/foreign/mearsh.htm>.

³⁴ Chongsik Lee argued that the Chinese Civil War was the major factor for the division of the Korean Peninsula. Stalin saw that he must support the CCP to win the

Korea had generously helped the CCP Northeast Bureau in many ways. For instance, after the fall of Antong and Tonghua, fifteen thousand wounded and sick Chinese communist soldiers, along with their families, retreated to North Korea and lived with Korean families. Korea had also supplied the Northeast Bureau with all kinds of materials, including weaponry. By June 1947, the Northeast Bureau had received 800 to 1,000 ship freights of supplies, mainly military supplies, from Korea. Moreover, Korea also received Chinese Communists in transit. It was estimated that twenty thousand Chinese Communists had passed through Korean territory.³⁵ In short, Kim Il-sung did exactly what he promised in his letter to General Lin Bao: to do everything within his capacity to help the CCP.

The CCP reciprocated Kim Il-sung's help by supplying him with grain and soldiers. By summer 1947, the Northeast Bureau sent ten thousand tons of grain to Kim.³⁶ Moreover, the CCP helped Kim to build an army that was composed mainly of ethnic Koreans who had served in the former Korean Volunteer Army. The transfer of

Civil War against the Nationalist Kuomintang to gain an important communist ally in Asia. Stalin used North Korea as the support base for Chinese People Liberation Army thus the main consequence was he could not let North Korea to unite with South Korea. North Korea is strategically important for his support to CCP. Chongsik Lee, "Review of the Past Korean History after the Liberation at 21st Century," Congressional Research Service, Memorandum, Subject: Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1874, 8 October 2010, accessed 13 May 2015, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/152630.pdf>.

³⁵ Zhihua Shen, Working Paper Series 08-09, "Alliance of "Tooth and Lips" or Marriage of Convenience? The Origins and Development of the PRC-North Korean Alliance 1946-1958" (Paper, School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, December 2008), 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

these ethnic Korean People's Liberation Army soldiers to Kim Il-sung was arguably the greatest help that CCP could have provided.

Both Kim Il-sung and Mao Zedong understood how important cooperation was to their respective struggles for power. Kim Il-sung expressed that it was the lofty, internationalist obligation of the Korean Communist Party and people to aid the Chinese people's revolutionary cause. Moreover, he believed that the victory of the Chinese Revolution would benefit Korea's security and development. Mao Zedong also firmly believed in the unity of Asian anti-imperialist forces. He believed that it was necessary for the communist states to join hand-in-hand and realize their revolutionary cause together.

In 1949, when the Chinese Communist revolution achieved nationwide victory and Kim Il-sung was planning to unify the entire Korean Peninsula through a revolutionary war, the Korean communists hoped that their Chinese comrades would return the favor. However, Mao Zedong dismissed the idea of war. Mao did not want Kim Il-sung to take any military action before the CCP accomplished the reunification of China, which meant with Taiwan, which was under Nationalist control. For Mao, the purpose of CCP aid to North Korea was not to help it to attack the South but was to help Kim defend the North.

Instead, Kim Il-sung went directly to Stalin to get approval for his reunification war plan. Stalin endorsed Kim's plan and forced the war on Mao. Mao transferred 50,000

to 70,000 ethnic Korean soldiers in the PLA—with their weapons—back to Korea.³⁷ Mao also proposed that he would dispatch Chinese troops to Korea if the United States intervened in the war. By then, ill feelings had grown between North Korean and Chinese leadership. Kim resented the fact that Mao had been reluctant to support his plan for unification war, despite all the things that he had done to support the Chinese revolutionary struggle. Meanwhile, Mao believed that the unification of China should have priority (Tibet and Taiwan) over Korean unification. Mao was also made very unhappy by Kim Il-sung's action in turning to Moscow directly without his consultation.

Because Kim was upset and distrustful of the Chinese, he did not inform the Chinese government of North Korea's war mobilization progress and the exact schedule of the invasion. During the war years, especially after Chinese troops entered the war to rescue the Kim regime in October 1950, China's relations with North Korea were closer but plagued with disputes. The first dispute was who should command the joint army. Kim Il-sung intended to take over the command of the Chinese People Volunteer Army (CPVA)³⁸ and proposed to combine the Chinese and Korean command post. China, with the endorsement of Stalin, assumed the post as the chief of joint command of the CPVA and KPA; meanwhile a North Korean officer assumed the deputy post. It hurt Kim Il-sung's Nationalist pride to give up command of the North Korean troops to China.

³⁷ Jian Chen, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance: An Historical Overview of Chinese-North Korean Relations," *Asia Program Special Report*, no. 115 (September 2003): 5.

³⁸ CPVA is the Chinese People Volunteer Army. China named its army which is deployed to North Korea to help it fight the UN forces as a volunteer army in order to avoid international criticism and make it look less formal.

The second dispute was deciding whether PRC-North Korean troops should continue to advance after they crossed the 38th parallel. Peng Duhai, Commander of CPVA refused to further advance the CPVA beyond the 38th parallel after they conquered Seoul on 8 January 1951. Peng Duhai argued that the CPVA's supply line is already badly strained and the U.S. Army is still controlling the air. Peng Duhai also received Stalin's blessing on his decision. Stalin suggested that in order to minimize international pressure on China, the CPVA should not advance beyond the 38th parallel. According to the Soviet ambassador to North Korea, this episode damaged China's prestige among North Korean leaders.³⁹ They rumored that the CPVA seemed reluctant to pursue the total liberation of Korea when the American aggressors were losing the war in early 1951.

The third point of PRC-North Korean conflict was over the control of the North Korean railroad. At the beginning of the war, the principle agreement was that CPVA headquarters controlled the railroad. However, by spring of 1951, as the war was protracting, PRC-DPRK disagreement over the control of the railroad emerged. North Korea was concerned about economic recovery and demanded priority be given to the transport of civilian materials. On the other hand, China was mainly concerned with the development of war, and insisted priority must be given to the transport of military supplies.⁴⁰ The CPVA and the North Korean government competed for use of the railroad and thus complicated the progress of war. Stalin decided to intervene. He ordered that the

³⁹ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: the Making of PRC-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 205.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

Korean railroad must be placed under the control of Chinese headquarters in Korea. The railroad issue affected North Korea's domestic affairs and touched its national sovereignty. It left hard feelings in Kim Il-sung's heart that China imposed its opinion on him with Moscow's help.⁴¹

The fourth dispute of PRC-DPRK war relation was over timing for ending the war. In late May 1951, China decided to adopt strategy of "negotiating while fighting, striving for a solution through negotiations."⁴² Kim Il-sung was opposed to China's policy and demanded that PRC-DPRK joint army to launch a final offensive instead. Once again, with Stalin intervention, Kim accepted the Chinese proposal for truce negotiation.

Despite the disputes in the internal PRC-DPRK joint army, they managed to sign an armistice agreement with the UN Command on 27 July 1953. China's willingness to enter the war in order to help rescue Kim Il-sung's regime was nevertheless the first sign of informal alliance between China and North Korea. However, conflicts before and during the war also damaged Kim Il-sung's national pride and personal trust toward Chinese leaders. This scar was further deepened by an incident in August 1956. The path seems to lead to the pool of enmity.

Despite the Korean War truce in 1953, the war parties could not conclude a peace treaty. To help North Korea with its development, China offered tremendous economic aid. In 1954, China gave North Korea eight trillion Chinese Yuan; it also forgave all its

⁴¹ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 207.

⁴² Zhihua Shen, "Alliance of 'Tooth and Lips' or Marriage of Convenience?" 14.

wartime aid from 1950 to 1953, totaling 7.29 trillion Chinese Yuan.⁴³ Unfortunately, China and North Korea still could not build a closer relationship.

A report from the Soviet foreign ministry mentioned that PRC-DPRK relations were awkward after the end of the war. For instance, CPVA headquarters were several miles away from Pyongyang.⁴⁴ The living conditions at the headquarters were poor and North Korean leaders barely visited there. The report also mentioned that Kim Il-sung planned to systematically remove those who had lived in China from his party and government posts.

In 1955, Kim Il-sung became increasingly dictatorial in his leadership. He neither tolerated the continuous existence of any remaining pro-foreign faction within his party, nor felt comfortable with having to live under the shadow of China. All of this formed one of the most important conditions under which Kim introduced in 1955 the “juche” ideology, emphasizing that Korean revolution must be carried out in an indigenous Korean way and must achieve “self-reliance” in all spheres.⁴⁵

It was against this backdrop that a series of crises erupted between Pyongyang and Beijing in late 1956 (the August incident). Kim Il-sung started to purge those who could potentially challenge his power and prestige in the internal KWP power struggle.

⁴³ Zhihua Shen, “Alliance of ‘Tooth and Lips’ or Marriage of Convenience?” 14.

⁴⁴ The CPVA remained in North Korea even after the end of the Korean War. The CPVA stayed in North Korea until 1958 in order to help North Korea in their effort for post-war reconstruction.

⁴⁵ Zhihua Shen, “Alliance of ‘Tooth and Lips’ or Marriage of Convenience?” 14.

Kim Il-sung's target was the Yan'an faction.⁴⁶ At an August 30-31 KWP Central Committee plenary session that was officially designated for Kim to give a speech on his recent visit to the Soviet Union and East Europe, several prominent party leaders who belonged to the Yan'an and pro-Soviet factions stood up to criticize Kim's personality cult and challenge his economic policies. Kim, informed of the attack in advance, organized effective rebuttals. This resulted in four top party cadres—Yun Kong Hum (Minister of Commerce), So Hwi (Chairman of Trade Unions), Yi Pil Guy (Minister of Construction Materials), and Kim Kang—fleeing to China, and several other party cadres (including Yi Sang Jo, DPRK's ambassador to Moscow and a member of the Yan'an faction) seeking asylum in the Soviet Union. Kim responded by expanding the purge. In addition to expelling these cadres from the party, two top party leaders, Choi Chang Ik (head of the Yan'an faction after Pak Il Yu's purge) and Pak Chang Ok (head of the pro-Soviet faction) were both expelled from the party and arrested.

In response, those KWP cadres who had fled to Beijing and Moscow presented their cases to the Chinese and Soviet parties. Regarding the recent crisis within the KWP leadership as caused by differences in policies and opinions rather than, as Kim had claimed, "reactionary attacks on the party," Beijing and Moscow decided to step in to investigate and provide mediation.⁴⁷ On 19 September, in the middle of the CCP's own Eighth National Congress, two Chinese marshals, Peng Dehuai (who had been the commander of Chinese troops to Korea) and Nie Rongzhen, together with the Soviet

⁴⁶ Yan'an faction is a group of pro-Chinese communists within the KWP. They were members of the CCP and spent sometime in CCP headquarter in Yan'an China.

⁴⁷ Jian Chen, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance," 6.

Union's first deputy prime minister and party politburo member Anastas Mikoyan, flew to Pyongyang to meet with Kim Il-sung. After intensive discussions lasting four days, Kim finally agreed to make some concessions. On the same day that Peng, Nie, and Mikoyan left Pyongyang, 23 September, another plenary session of the KWP Central Committee decided to restore Choi Chang Ik and Pak Chang Ok to the Central Committee and to reinstate Yun Kong Hum, So Hwi, and Yi Pil Gyu as party members.⁴⁸

However, this was the last time that Beijing (and Moscow) was able to force Kim to change his course of action, and, as it soon turned out, Kim's concessions were only temporary. A few months later, he not only waged massive purges of the "August factionists" but also, through carrying out a "concentrated guidance" campaign, established a more monolithic political structure with himself as North Korea's undisputable paramount leader.⁴⁹ Consequently, a face-to-face dispute reportedly occurred between Mao and Kim. In November 1957, when both Mao and Kim were attending a meeting of leaders of Communist and Workers' Parties from socialist countries in Moscow, the North Korean leader suggested to Mao that Beijing should hand the Korean "traitors" taking refuge in China back to Pyongyang. Mao refused, advising Kim that he should not treat comrades with different opinions as "reactionaries" but should learn from the CCP's practice of "while no one would be executed the majority would not be arrested" in handling inner-party struggle.⁵⁰ In doing so, Mao was

⁴⁸ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 6.

⁴⁹ Jian Chen, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance," 6.

⁵⁰ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 7.

expressing strong disagreement with Kim's bloody purge within the KWP. Kim, reportedly, felt quite offended.

PRC-DPRK Signed Alliance Treaty
(Strengthened #1, 1961)

The trajectory of the PRC-North Korea relations was leading toward an uneasy relation. Two major conflicts contributed to the deterioration of PRC-DPRK relationship. First, the major disputes during the Korean War (1950-1953): Kim Il-sung bypassing Mao to invade South Korea; CPVA under Peng refused to move further than the 38th parallel; dispute over the control of the North Korean railroad; and dispute over the timing to end the war. Second, a major conflict was the purge of the Yan'an faction in the August incident. China intervened in Kim Il-sung's internal matters by dispatching Peng Duhai to negotiate the pardon of the Yan'an faction. Kim Il-sung regarded this intervention as a direct threat toward his independence and national sovereignty.⁵¹

Against this seemingly bleak prospect for a meaningful relation, a single contingent event changed the path of PRC-North Korea relations. A period of critical juncture emerged in 1956 with Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech in the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union with the title of On the Personality Cult and its Consequences. On 25 February, the very last day of the Congress, it was announced that an unscheduled session had been called for the Soviet delegates. Khrushchev's morning speech began with vague references to the harmful consequences of elevating a single individual so high that he took on the "supernatural characteristics akin to those of a

⁵¹ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 7.

god.”⁵² Khrushchev went on to say that, such a mistake had been made about Stalin. Khrushchev’s secret speech criticized the practice of cult of personality during Stalin’s era and began the period of De-Stalinization in the Communist Party of Soviet Union. These occurrences shocked Mao, who had supported Stalin ideologically and politically, because Khrushchev was dismantling Mao’s support of the United Soviet Socialist Republic with public rejections of most of Stalin’s leadership and actions—such as announcing the end of the Cominform, and (most troubling to Mao) de-emphasizing the core Marxist-Leninist thesis of inevitable war between capitalism and socialism. Resultantly, contradicting Stalin, Khrushchev was advocating the idea of Peaceful Coexistence, between communist and capitalist nations—which directly challenged Mao’s lean-to-one-side foreign policy, adopted after the Chinese Civil War.

Nikita Khrushchev’s anti cult of personality campaign was also directly aimed at China and North Korea. In China, Mao’s charisma and ideology have confirmed him as the undisputed paramount leader. He gained his first fame as the leader of the Long March in which the Communist forces, against all odds, successfully escaped the Nationalist Kuomintang encirclement. His popularity was further enhanced in the 1950s with the victory in Korean War and a series of successful reforms. CPVA success in driving back the U.S. led UN forces was a huge legitimacy boost in Mao’s leadership. He proved for the first time that Chinese people were also able to stand up against the strongest imperialist army, the United States. Mao’s land reform movement was widely popular among the rural peasants. It significantly improved their standard of living. Mao

⁵² Nikita Khrushchev, “Speech to 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U.,” 24-25 February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev Reference Archive, Soviet Government Documents, accessed 12 February 2015, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24-abs.htm>.

also developed his own distinctive ideology of “Maoism” which emphasized the importance of continuous struggle and mass line.⁵³ Meanwhile in North Korea, Kim Il-sung used cult of personality to strengthen his grip over power in the KWP. Kim exploited his anti-Japanese guerilla life and projected himself as the hero of anti-Japanese movement. Kim also proclaimed North Korea’s victory in the Korean War.

Kim gained significant prestige as the commanding general of the war for the unification of the motherland. Kim Il-sung, similar to Mao, developed his own ideology. He created *juche* in 1955, placing himself on par with Mao and Stalin in communist ideology refinement.

Khrushchev’s sudden attack drastically changed the Chinese view of the Soviet Union. The period of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization and criticism over the cult of personality which started in 1956 and reached its peak in the 22nd Congress of Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1961, widened the PRC-Soviet split. The PRC-Soviet split convinced Mao to challenge Soviet Union in the leadership of international communist movement. Mao believed that he was ideologically and theoretically more refined compared to Khrushchev. Mao saw that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union already lost its prestige and power with the 1956 Hungarian turmoil.⁵⁴ In contrast, China expanded its influence among the third world Asian and

⁵³ The mass line is the political, organizational, and leadership method developed by Mao Zedong and the CCP during the Chinese revolution. It is a term for a party policy aimed at broadening and cultivating contacts with the masses of the people and to accentuate the leadership role of the CCP.

⁵⁴ The Hungarian turmoil (October 1956) was an uprising against the communist government of People’s Republic of Hungary and Soviet dominance. It symbolized the Soviet Union’s incompetence in managing its sphere of influence. Khrushchev was

African states. There are two important characteristics of the international communist camp to understand Mao's ambition in the international communist movement. First, communist theory rejected the concept of sovereign nation state. Therefore, a communist party should place the interest of the international communist movement before any national interests. Second, hierarchy, instead of equality, governed the international communist community. There should be one leading influential communist state to guide and lead the world revolution.

This period in the juncture of early PRC-Soviet confrontation forced China to change its policy. China needed to gather as many allies as possible in the international communist camp for its aim for world communist leadership. China needs to win North Korea back to its side. First, China became less sympathetic toward the Yan'an faction cadres in exile. In 1957, the CCP no longer wished to interfere with the domestic affairs of its brother-like party and country. CCP members were instructed to avoid all contact with the Korean and Korean-Chinese in exile, and to refrain from discussing Korea-related problems with anyone.

Second, during the August incident, the Chinese government had remained silent on North Korea's request for additional aid or loan of fifty million Chinese Yuan for the year of 1957. Eventually, China denied this request. In return, North Korea cancelled the China trip of its economic delegation led by Kim Il-sung. However, things had changed since then. The Chinese government now did everything it could to welcome Kim Il-

hesitant to use punitive measures to quell the rebellion, in contrast to Mao, who managed to gather international support to use violent and punitive means to control the rebellion.

sung's economic delegation. In September 1957, China this time agreed to provide an additional loan to North Korea; PRC-North Korea relations warmed considerably.

Third, Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung made a series of gestures and speeches to strengthen their relations. By early 1958, Kim in his speech used the phrase, "the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union and China," and praised China for its unmistakable strength and tremendous role in resolving international conflicts.⁵⁵ In response, Mao Zedong had completely changed his opinion about KWP and its August incident. In one of his speeches, Mao praised Kim Il-sung for his signing of Moscow Declarations, as well as his insistence on anti-imperialism, socialism, and proletarian internationalism. Mao also added that despite its good intentions, it was a bad move for the Soviet Union and China to go to Pyongyang and interfere in North Korea's domestic affairs. The flattering remarks by North Korea and China significantly improved PRC-DPRK relations.

Fourth Mao Zedong agreed to withdraw CPVA from North Korea completely. During the Moscow Conference in November 1957, Mao met with Kim Il-sung twice, and proposed a withdrawal of all remaining CPVA troops from North Korea. Kim agreed with Mao that the Chinese troops' withdrawal could press the Americans to do the same in South Korea. On 14 February, Zhou Enlai led the Chinese delegation to North Korea to discuss the specifics of the withdrawal of the CPVA. China and North Korea also made a statement, emphasizing that the Korean problem should be resolved by Koreans themselves through negotiation and that foreign interference is unnecessary. The CPVA was divided into three groups, the last group departed on August 1958. The CPVA then

⁵⁵ Zhijia Shen, "Alliance of 'Tooth and Lips' or Marriage of Convenience?" 22.

transferred all its camps, arms and equipments, and other supplies to the KPA free. After eight years of military cooperation, the CPVA finally returned to China in total, undoubtedly boosting PRC-DPRK relations.

China opened the discourse to conclude an alliance treaty with North Korea in 1960. China signed the treaty of friendship with Burma on 28 January 1960, and pushed ahead with the conclusion of a treaty with Mongolia. After the Mongolian government consented to the Chinese suggestion of signing the “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation,” on 21 March 1960, Mao Zedong ordered the CCP to thoroughly examine the possibility of signing a similar alliance treaty with North Korea and Vietnam, saying that “if North Korea and Vietnam want to conclude alliance treaty, including an article about Chinese military aid, I think that will be practicable.”⁵⁶ This was the origin of the idea of concluding the military alliance with North Korea, which had been carefully pushed forward.

Furthermore, China made a significant increase in economic aid to North Korea, apparently for winning North Korea’s favor. The aid agreement was concluded in Beijing on 13 October 1960, under which China extended credit of 105 million dollars to North Korea for use over the 1961 to 1964 period, which raised the total of Chinese economic aid to North Korea to just below the Soviet Union’s total aid.⁵⁷ Taking into account that China was suffering from massive starvation during the period of the Great Leap Forward

⁵⁶ Mao Zedong, “Comments on the Issue of Signing PRC-Mongolian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation,” in *Mao Zedong’s Manuscripts since the Founding of the State*, vol. 9 (Beijing: Documents Research Office of the Chinese Communist Party Centre, 21 March 1960), 88.

⁵⁷ Office of Intelligence Research, *Intelligence Report, Report on the Korean Problems*, vol. 5 (Seoul: National Institute of Korean History, 2003), 455-456.

Movement (1958-1962), it suggested that China was committed to form a military alliance with North Korea.

China and North Korea concluded the PRC-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance on 11 July 1960.⁵⁸ Following is a discussion of the major points in the content of the treaty. Article 1 of the PRC-DPRK treaty is a declarative clause pledging efforts for the protection of world peace and security of all nations. While the Soviet-North Korean treaty advocated only the principal of proletarian internationalism, the PRC-North Korean treaty added the “fraternal” cooperation between two states.⁵⁹ Article 2 is a provision on mutual military assistance in the event of security threats to either party. The phrases on detailed military intervention imbue the treaty with characteristics of a pact for a security alliance.⁶⁰ Both China and North Korea committed themselves to immediate assistance at their disposal, which had been evaluated as “a more direct and categorical commitment” than that of the Soviet-North Korean treaty. Article 3 “Neither party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other party or take in any bloc or in any action or measure directed against the other party.” This clause has the effect of restricting diplomatic activities of each other to forestall cooperation with capitalist states. Article 4 provides that the two states will continue to consult with each other on all important international issues of common interest. This article enabled China to promote a greater sense of stability and permanency in its political relations with

⁵⁸ For further detail of the PRC-North Korea treaty of friendship see Appendix A.

⁵⁹ North Korea concluded a similar treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union on 6 July 1961, just two weeks before the conclusion of PRC-North Korea treaty of friendship.

⁶⁰ Liu Jinzhi, *The Documents on China's Policies toward North and South Koreas*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Social Science Publishing House, 1999), 1279-1280.

North Korea. Article 5 says that the two states, under the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, nonintervention in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and in the spirit of friendly cooperation, will continue to provide each other with every possible economic and technological assistance, and continue to consolidate and develop economic, cultural, and scientific and technological cooperation. This provision clarifies that the treaty is not confined to security alliance but concerns cooperation in multiple areas. Article 6 refers to reunification of the Korean Peninsula. It provides that "the Unification of Korea should be realized along peaceful and democratic lines" and that "such solution accords exactly with the national interests of the Korean people and the aim of preserving peace in the Far East." This article seems to have fully reflected Pyongyang's position. Article 7 says that the treaty takes effect upon the exchange of documents of ratification and will continue to remain in force until both parties agree on its amendment or termination. The treaty will be valid for a period of 20 years and will need to be renewed.⁶¹

Chinese Cultural Revolution (Weakened #1, 1966)

In the early 1960s, Pyongyang further gained leverage in its dealings with Beijing when a great polemic debate concerning the nature of true communism emerged and intensified between China and the Soviet Union. In appearance, the North Koreans maintained neutrality toward Beijing and Moscow, but in reality they were more sympathetic to Beijing (this was largely due to Kim's resentment of Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign and criticism of Stalin's cult of personality). When the CCP

⁶¹ The People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance."

was increasingly isolated in the international communist movement with the deepening of the PRC-Soviet split, sympathetic support from Pyongyang became more and more important to Beijing. In a 1964 conversation with Choi Yong Kun, North Korea's second in command, Mao even asked him to comment on whether or not the Soviet Union would attack the PRC from the north, trying to win firmer support from Pyongyang. During this period, although Beijing's influence upon Pyongyang was further reduced, Chinese-North Korean relations—now based upon a foundation that was quite different from that of the early and mid-1950s—were very close.⁶²

However, the situation changed in the mid-1960s. On the one hand, after Khrushchev's downfall in October 1964, the new Soviet leadership started providing more material support to the DPRK; on the other hand, the eruption of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 sunk China's party, state and society into great chaos, causing the PRC's external relations in general—and its relations with the DPRK in particular—to be severely derailed. Consequently, PRC-DPRK relations reached low ebb from 1967 to 1969, when the Cultural Revolution was experiencing its most hectic stage. In late 1966, the internal propaganda of North Korea began to criticize “dogmatism” and “superpower chauvinism,” clearly associated with China. For years, the major culprit in the North Korea's internal propaganda was the “modern revisionism” of the Soviet Union.⁶³ In December 1966, at a secret meeting with Soviet leader Brezhnev,

⁶² Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 7.

⁶³ Andrei Lankov, “Balancing Between 2 Communist Powers,” *The Korea Times*, 9 December 2007, accessed 6 February 2015, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2013/05/166_15196.html.

Kim Il-sung described the cultural revolution as a “massive idiocy.”⁶⁴ In retaliation, the Chinese press began to attack Kim Il-sung in early 1967. Throughout 1967, the Red Guards newspapers frequently called Kim Il-sung a “revisionist” the worst term of abuse in the communist camp. He was accused of “blocking the revolutionary will of the masses” and by not starting the cultural revolution in his realm.⁶⁵

The propaganda war escalated in 1968. In the summer of 1968, the Chinese installed loudspeakers at the border and used them to blast North Korea with Chinese propaganda, largely with tales about the unparalleled wisdom of Mao. The Koreans retaliated in kind, by installing their own loudspeakers and bombarding their opponents with Kim Il-sung’s greatness and superhuman wisdoms. The Beijing leadership, which was itself in constant disorder, did little to stop these activities. At some points, it even seemed that the PRC-DPRK alliance was going to be undermined. Therefore, Chinese-North Korean relations were injured and fell into the mire. There was no new economic and cultural cooperation agreement or exchange visit of high-ranking leaders between the two countries from 1966 to 1969, the first three years of the Cultural Revolution.

Then why did the PRC-North Korea alliance and their relations deteriorate and fail to develop after the PRC-DPRK treaty? In order to answer the question it is necessary to look at the source of negative feedback in PRC-DPRK alliance. Several factors influenced the PRC-DPRK alliance negatively.

Firstly, Kim Il-sung’s fundamental foreign policy was tactfully manipulating the two socialist giants, China and the Soviet Union, by adopting policies of equidistance,

⁶⁴ Lankov.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

emphasizing North Korean gains such as autonomy in foreign policies and political independence in domestic affairs.⁶⁶ Kim Il-sung would easily shift allegiance in between China and the Soviet Union in order to extract the best benefits. During the The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution China cut off all of its diplomatic relations and contacts to the outside world, thus no economic aid could be extracted from China. In the Soviet Union, the development was in the favor of Kim Il-sung. Khrushchev's downfall in October 1964 meant that Kim could negotiate with the new leader to amend the Soviet-DPRK relations, which had been deteriorating due to North Korea support for China in the PRC-Soviet split. After Brezhnev came to power in 1964, DPRK-Soviet relations recovered, and from 1965 to 1968, Soviet aid to North Korea gradually increased. In 1966, North Korea requested Soviet aid for the construction of power plants, metal processing factories, aluminum factories, ammonium factories, and etcetera. North Korea even requested aid for petroleum refinery despite the fact that they had no crude oil storage facilities.⁶⁷ In 1967, with Soviet help, North Korea broke ground on the two million-kilowatt Bukchang Thermal Power Plant, which over the years has undergone many expansions to become the largest power plant in North Korea.⁶⁸ Hence, it was clearly in Kim Il-sung's best interests to abandon China and lean toward the Soviet Union for aid.

⁶⁶ Yong Chol Ha, "Soviet Perception of Soviet-North Korea Relations," *Asian Survey* 26, no. 5 (May 1986): 573.

⁶⁷ Cho Min, "North Korea's 'War Business' and the Choice for China," Korea Institute for National Unification, Seoul, accessed 31 March 2015, <http://www.kinu.or.kr/upload/neoboard/DATA01/co10-46%28E%29.pdf>, 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Second, the Cultural Revolution in China had changed the elites from reformist to radical groups. During the period prior to the Cultural Revolution, the elites in China were mainly composed of Liu Shaoqi, head of the state, and Deng Xiaoping. Liu and Deng tried to implement policies of economic reconstruction in China with the hope to revive the country's economy after the devastation done by the Great Leap Forward. Mao, fearing that Liu and Deng might attempt to force him out of power and derail China from the path of continuous revolutionary struggles, allied himself with the radicals to remove them from power. In August 1966, having lined up his Cultural Revolution Coalition at the apex of the political system, Mao unleashed the Red Guards to attack the party. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were the main targets of the Red Guard's criticism. The Red Guards accused Liu as "China's Khrushchev" and Deng as "the number two person in authority taking the capitalist road."⁶⁹ In July 1966, Liu was displaced as the party deputy chairman by Lin Biao. By 1967, Liu and his wife were placed under house arrest in Beijing. Liu was removed from all his positions and expelled from the party in 1968. Meanwhile Deng Xiaoping was sent to the Xinjian County Tractor Factory in rural Jiangxi province to work as a regular worker. The only remaining moderate elite in China was Zhou Enlai, but Zhou understood very well that it was futile for him to challenge Mao and the radicals in the apex of their power. With moderate leaders gone, China was fully under the radicals Maoist group. The role of Liu, Deng, and Zhou in maintaining good relations with North Korea was crucial. Liu, Deng, and Zhou frequently met with Kim Il-sung and were fully aware of the importance of North Korea's position in the

⁶⁹ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 114.

PRC-Soviet split. They pursued a pragmatic approach in China's foreign policy, thus enabling China to maintain good relations with North Korea. The radical group, the Gang of Four (led by Lin Bao and Mao's wife, Jiang Qing), in contrast, closed off contacts, and put China under self-isolation from the rest of the world. Their main goal was only to uphold Mao's cult of personality and challenge anyone who dared to oppose Mao's thought and revolutionary line including Kim Il-sung.

Third, Kim Il-sung changed his beliefs and preferences by adopting and supporting Brezhnev's proposal for peaceful co-existence with the capitalist world and proposal for the resolution of German issue. During Khrushchev's administration, Kim Il-sung and Mao rejected the idea of peaceful co-existence as a resolution revisionist idea deviating from the path of Stalin's policy. Kim also criticized the proposal for resolution of German issue—dialogue and peaceful co-existence—as direct threats to his unification by invasion idea for the Korean Peninsula. However, in order to strengthen the Soviet Union's support, he changed his preferences to be in line with the Soviet Union's peaceful co-existence principle.⁷⁰

Zhou Enlai Visit to Pyongyang (Strengthened #2, 1970)

When both Beijing and Pyongyang strongly felt the negative impact caused by the deterioration of their relationship, they started to take action to improve relations. In January 1968, when a serious crisis erupted between the DPRK and the United States after the U.S. intelligence vessel *Pueblo* and its crew were captured by the North Koreans, the PRC government issued a statement on 29 January 1968 to provide “firm

⁷⁰ Yong Chol Ha, 575.

support” to the DPRK.⁷¹ Then a dramatic turn in Chinese-North Korean relations occurred on 30 September 1969, the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the PRC’s establishment. Although Beijing had decided in principle that no foreign delegation would be invited to attend the celebrations for the anniversary, at 3:20 p.m. on 30 September, “for the purpose of improving Chinese-Korean relations,” Beijing issued an invitation for a top North Korean leader to visit Beijing.⁷² At 6:25 p.m., Pyongyang replied that Choi Yong Kun would travel to China, and Choi arrived in Beijing at 11:30 that evening. The next day, Mao met with him atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace, telling him “the relations between our two countries are special and our aims are identical, so we should improve our relations.”⁷³ Mao issued these statements at a time when China was not only engaged in a two-decade-long confrontation with the United States, but also, and worse, faced a serious security threat from the Soviet Union—indeed, reportedly Moscow even considered conducting preemptive strikes on China’s nuclear facilities. It would have been unwise if Beijing had failed to take action to improve relations with the DPRK as a neighbor and a Communist ally. However, this also meant that Beijing’s leverage upon Pyongyang became even more limited than before.

In the early 1970s, China began to adjust its radical foreign policy. As a part of this policy adjustment, China made efforts to patch up its relations with North Korea, which had broken due to the Cultural Revolution. Beginning with Premier Zhou Enlai’s visit to Pyongyang in April 1970, Chinese leaders frequently paid visits to North Korea.

⁷¹ Jian Chen, “Limits of the ‘Lips and Teeth’ Alliance,” 7.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Zhou Enlai visited Pyongyang in 1970, and delivered his personal apology to Kim Il-sung for the insults and propaganda war that happened during the Cultural Revolution. During these visits, the “militant friendship cemented by fresh blood” was constantly stressed by Chinese leaders.⁷⁴ China’s visits were reciprocated by visits of North Korean leaders, which culminated in Kim Il-sung’s visit to Beijing in April 1975.⁷⁵ China increased its economic assistance to Pyongyang in the 1970s. A numbers of new agreements such as Mutual Supplying Goods Agreement and Free Military Assistance Agreement were signed. In 1976, the Chinese-Korean Friendship Oil Pipeline was opened to convey crude oil to North Korea at the preferential price, making China the biggest and most stable oil supplier for North Korea.

The event of Zhou Enlai’s visit to North Korea had positive effects on PRC-North Korea alliance. Why did China and North Korea make efforts to patch up their relations and resume the PRC-North Korea alliance after the Cultural Revolution?

First, the alliance served the national interests of China and North Korea. The period of the early 1970s was the height of PRC-Soviet conflict and PRC-U.S. conflict. In 1969, units of the Chinese and Soviet armies were involved in an armed conflict along the PRC-Soviet border in the Ussuri River. The conflict was serious to the extent that Soviet Union considered a pre-emptive attacks against China’s nuclear weapon

⁷⁴ Guangyao Jin and Xiuyu Fang, “China’s Policy Toward North Korea: Historical Review and Present Challenge” (Paper, Center for Korean Studies at Fudan University, Shanghai, 4 March 2005), 4.

⁷⁵ Ilpyong J. Kim, “North Korea’s Relations with China,” in *Foreign Relations of North Korea during Kim Il-sung’s Last Days*, ed. Dong Joon Kim (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, Seoul, 1994), 257.

facilities.⁷⁶ Between 1965 and 1970, over 320,000 Chinese soldiers fought the Americans along with the North Vietnamese Army in Vietnam. With disputes on two fronts, the PRC-Soviet border war and the PRC-U.S. Vietnam War, China had to secure its Northeastern border with North Korea. China could not afford to continue its conflict with North Korea. Instead, by improving relations with North Korea, China could ensure its PRC-North Korea border stability and retain North Korea as its security buffer against the Soviet Union. On the other hand, North Korea gladly welcomed China's gestures for reconciliation. Improved relations with Beijing meant that North Korea could secure aid and benefits from both China and the Soviet Union at the same time.

The other important notion is large set-up cost. The cost to maintain good relations and to set up the PRC-North Korea treaty of alliance was considerably high, especially on the Chinese side. The biggest cost China paid to secure the alliance was its involvement during the Korean War. China sacrificed inordinate, material, human, and political cost. China spent 6.2 billion Yuan in the war and owed \$1.3 billion to the United Soviet Socialist Republic.⁷⁷ China suffered more than 740,000 casualties⁷⁸—including

⁷⁶ Thomas Robinson, "The PRC-Soviet Border Dispute: Background, Development, and the March 1969 Clashes," *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 4 (December 1972): 1175.

⁷⁷ Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York, "Korean War in the View of Cost Effectiveness," accessed 31 March 2015, <http://www.nyconsulate.prchina.org/eng/xw/t31430>.

⁷⁸ According to one Chinese official estimate, combat casualties were more than 360,000 (including 130,000 wounded) and non-combat casualties were more than 380,000.

Mao's son—China missed the opportunity to “liberate” Taiwan, was excluded from the UN for more than two decades, and lost twenty years in its modernization drive.⁷⁹

On 23 November 1954, despite strained relations due to PRC-North Korean disputes during the war, China and North Korea signed the PRC-North Korean Economic and Cultural Cooperation Agreement. China provided a huge amount of aid to North Korea. China's aid included the cancellation of North Korea's wartime debt, which amounted to \$362.5 million, and a gift of \$400 million in aid for the period between 1954 and 1957.⁸⁰ In addition, Mao agreed to station the CPVA in North Korea for five years following the war, helping with reconstruction projects. From 1954 to 1956, China also looked after 22,735 Korean children refugees. China's economic aid in sum (\$750 million) is much higher than the total aid from Soviet Union and Eastern European countries (\$550 million). China's aid to North Korea in 1954 was equal to 3.4 percent of China's 1954 national budget. China offered enormous commitment to North Korea in order to maintain its influence over North Korea in competition with Soviet Union.⁸¹

By October 1960, while China's economy was suffering immensely because of the recall of Soviet experts, China's debt with other socialist countries and massive starvation due to the failure of Great Leap Forward, Zhou Enlai guaranteed China's aid to the DPRK. Zhou also told the North Koreans that they could postpone paying back

⁷⁹ Samuel Kim, “The Future of China: PRC-ROK Relations,” in *The Future of China and Northeast Asia*, ed. Tae-Hwan Kwak and Melvin Gurtov (Seoul: Kyungnam University, 1997), 51.

⁸⁰ Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, North Korea International Documentation Project Working Paper 4, “China and the Post-War Reconstruction of North Korea 1953-1961” (Working Paper, Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, May 2012), 6.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Chinese loans when they matured, remarking that it was all right to put them off for another ten to twenty years, or even to posterity.⁸² On 13 October 1960, China and North Korea signed economic aid agreements. The Chinese government would provide \$105 million in long-term loans to North Korea from 1961 to 1964. Although 1960 was a year of terrible famine in China, the PRC furnished the DPRK with an additional 230 thousand tons of grain. By this act, China cemented North Korea's commitment for the alliance.⁸³

China once more sacrificed some of its strategic interest to make the PRC-North Korean treaty of alliance provisions more appealing than Soviet-North Korea alliance. The most salient feature of the PRC-North Korean treaty was the emphasis on the nature of military alliance. Whereas the Soviet-North Korean treaty was to go into effect only when either country was actually attacked, the PRC-North Korean treaty defined the bilateral relations as an alliance. In addition, while the PRC-North Korean treaty was effective for indefinite period, the Soviet-North Korean treaty was effective for only ten years. Thus, the PRC-North Korean treaty was stronger in security guarantees than the Soviet-North Korean treaty.⁸⁴

Second, the personal ties between top leaders of the two sides—who by then had known each other for over a quarter-century—played another key role to make the relationship stable. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping had made frequent contacts with North Korea leaders, especially with Kim Il-sung even before the formal

⁸² Shen and Xia, 30.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 34.

bilateral relations between China and North Korea in 1949. Zhou Enlai regularly visited North Korea in the period of Chinese Civil War to secure aid and support from Kim Il-sung. Zhou Enlai personally apologized to Kim Il-sung during his visit in 1970 regarding the insult and propaganda war of Cultural Revolution. In total, Kim Il-sung had made thirty official visits to China during his lifetime, which had brought him into great intimacy and profound friendship with Chinese leaders astride three generations.⁸⁵

PRC-ROK Normalization (Weakened #2, 1992)

The end of the Cold War represented a new era for international relations, not only ending the East-West conflict, but also having a great impact on the Korean Peninsula, the main battlefield of the Cold War in Asia. A symbolic event at the end of the Cold War was the collapse of the Soviet Union, which finally resulted in the collapse of the bipolar system, which had dominated the peninsula for the past four decades. However, before this dramatic change, the bipolar system on the peninsula had already begun to crack. In September 1990, Moscow, crossing the 38th parallel that delineated the borders of international power politics, established diplomatic relations with Seoul.

In the early 1990s, Chinese diplomacy was challenged not only by the changing international situation, but also by deteriorating relations with Western powers who had instituted sanctions against China after the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989. Facing difficulties, China adjusted its diplomatic strategy and instituted real-politik policies to meet the changing reality. The most noticeable change in China's diplomatic strategy was

⁸⁵ Zhang Tingyan, "Ineffaceable Memories: Close Bonds of Kim Il-sung with Chinese Leaders," *People's Daily Online*, 23 April 2002, accessed 1 March 2015, http://english.people.com.cn/200204/22/eng20020422_94522.shtml.

that the first priority was given to national interests instead of ideology. China's national interests, which were often mingled with or defined by ideology during the Mao era, were primarily viewed as national security and economic development during the era of Deng's reform and opening. The new diplomatic strategy resulted in a significant change in Chinese policy toward the Korean Peninsula.

During the Cold War, China treated North Korea as the only legitimate country on the peninsula and had no engagement of any kind (diplomatic, economic, and military) with South Korea (the ROK) until the 1980s. However, South Korea's economic importance to China rapidly increased in the 1980s. China's trade with South Korea began in the early 1980s in an indirect way and was developed into direct but non-governmental trade in 1988. In 1991, trade offices were opened in the capitals of both countries. Chinese-South Korean trade reached \$5.06 billion in 1992, making China the third largest trade partner of South Korea only second to the United States and Japan.⁸⁶ The increasing trade exchange made China's position "separating politics from economics" toward South Korea obsolete, and finally formal diplomatic relations were established between China and the ROK in August 1992.⁸⁷ Kim Il-sung was angered by China's sudden decision since he was kept in the dark about the normalization plan. Kim Il-sung accused China of betraying the sacred socialist brotherhood in favor of capitalism. Kim planned to do damage to China by establishing bilateral relation with

⁸⁶ Tian Zengpei, *China's Diplomacy since Reform and Opening* (Beijing: World Affairs Publishing House, 1993), 25-26.

⁸⁷ Jin and Fang, 4.

ROC (Taiwan) and terminating the treaty of friendship with China. However, due to China's strategic significance to North Korea, Kim Il-sung canceled the plan.

Diplomatic normalization signaled a great change in China's foreign policy toward the Korean Peninsula. Sole recognition was replaced by dual recognition, as summarized by Samuel Kim: "shifting from the familiar one-Korea policy to a one-Korea de jure, two-Koreas de facto policy and then to a two-Koreas de facto and de jure policy."⁸⁸ This change indicated that economic considerations had become the primary factor in China's decision, while ideological considerations greatly diminished. Obviously, China's two Koreas policy showed a tendency to attach great importance to the South rather than the North in early 1990s. North Korean leaders were certainly displeased with Chinese policy, but their reaction, compared to their criticism of Russia's establishment of relations with South Korea, was restrained.⁸⁹ When Russia normalized its diplomatic relations with South Korea, North Korea strongly condemned Russia for violating the interests of the former ally and cooperating with the United States and South Korea to encircle socialist countries.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, China's decision to normalize its relations with South Korea was a direct violation of article 3 of PRC-North Korea treaty of friendship, which says:

"Neither party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other party or take in any

⁸⁸ Samuel Kim, "The Future of China: PRC-ROK Relations," 271.

⁸⁹ PRC-ROK normalization angered Pyongyang. Kim Il-sung accused China of betraying their alliance and abandoning the its socialist commitment. Kim Il-sung planned to establish formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan and abandoning the one-China policy for a two-China policy in retaliation for China's diplomatic move.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

bloc or in any action or measure directed against the other party.”⁹¹ China and North Korea relations were interrupted due to this normalization. The period after normalization from 1992 to early 2000 was a lost decade in PRC-DPRK relations with no summit meeting between the two countries leaders’ and a decrease in the number of high-official level meetings either at party-to-party or government level.

The PRC-ROK normalization interrupted the PRC-North Korea alliance and produced negative feedback in the institution. First, South Korea had outshined North Korea in terms of economic development since the 1970s. South Korea continued to grow rapidly under the developmental state capitalism and the strong hand of President Park Chung-Hee and his successors. Meanwhile, North Korea was going down the path of economic crisis and contraction due to diminishing aid from the Soviet Union and economic mismanagement. As early as 1985, Deng Xiaoping had decided that China needed to develop healthy bilateral relations with South Korea for two reasons: to benefit business and economic interests; and to help South Korea terminate its relations with Taiwan. Furthermore, in 1992, Foreign Minister Qian argued that normalization with Seoul would: (1) increase Taiwan’s diplomatic isolation; (2) strengthen Beijing’s growing economic cooperation with Seoul; (3) diminish Pyongyang’s seemingly endless requests for more military and economic aid; and (4) enhance Beijing’s bargaining power to defuse mounting U.S. pressure from unfair trade practices done by China.⁹²

⁹¹ Jin and Fang, 4.

⁹² Scott Snyder, *China’s Rise and The Two Koreas: Politics, Economy, Security* (London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2009), 37.

Table 1. China's Trade with North and South Korea, 1981-1992 (U.S. \$ million)						
Year	PRC Import from DPRK	PRC Exports to DPRK	Total	PRC Imports from ROK	PRC Exports to ROK	Total
1981	231	300	531	205	75	280
1982	304	281	585	48	91	139
1983	254	273	527	51	69	120
1984	272	226	498	229	205	434
1985	257	231	488	683	478	1,161
1986	277	233	510	699	621	1,289
1987	236	277	513	813	866	1,679
1988	234	345	579	1,700	1,387	3,087
1989	185	377	562	1,438	1,705	3,143
1990	125	358	483	1,553	2,268	3,821
41991	86	525	611	2,371	3,441	5,812
1992	155	541	696	4,493	3,725	8,218

Source: China Statistical Yearbooks Database, "China Statistical Yearbook 1981-1992," China Academic Journals Electronic Publishing House, accessed 1 April 2015, <http://tongji.cnki.net/overseas/EngNavi/NaviDefault.aspx>.

As shown in table 1, even before China and South Korea established formal diplomatic relations, South Korea has surpassed North Korea in terms of total bilateral trade with China. In 1985, total bilateral trade between China and North Korea amounted to \$488 million. Meanwhile, China-South Korea trade reached \$1,161 million; almost triple the amount of the previous year of \$434 million, not counting the indirect trade via Hong Kong. South Korea's trade with China had already doubled the level of trade with North Korea, after having finally pulled even with North Korea in 1984.⁹³ The trends

⁹³ Snyder, *China's Rise and The Two Koreas*, 42.

were clear that in 1992 total trade between China and South Korea would surpass \$8.2 billion compared to China-North Korea trade, which only reached \$696 million. In a sense, it clearly showed that North Korea had lost in the competition with South Korea in winning China's favor.

Second, the biggest exogenous shock during the period of the early 1990s was the collapse of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991. The collapse of Soviet Union dissolved Cold War logic of balance of power and transformed the security environment in Northeast Asia. The bipolar arrangement was replaced by a unipolar system with the United States as the sole super power in the region. It also brought about new and important differences to the PRC and the DPRK. The most outstanding among them was the different ways in which Beijing and Pyongyang have coped with their respective legitimacy crises. Beijing chose to enhance the Reform and Opening process by establishing a Chinese-style socialist market economy so that China would be incorporated into the international community, whereas Pyongyang opted to remain closed to the outside world and stick to its own codes of behavior in every sense. Thus emerged a new fundamental difference between Beijing and Pyongyang that had not existed during most of the Cold War: While the PRC has gradually changed into an international actor within the existing international system, demonstrating a general willingness to be bound by the rules and regulations widely accepted by other actors, the DPRK has persistently stayed outside the existing international system, refusing to act in accordance with the widely accepted rules and regulations.

Third, China's foreign policy and domestic politics changed dramatically with the death of Lin Biao and Mao. Lin Bao who was supposed to be Mao's anointed successor

and leader of the radicals died in a plane crash in an apparent attempt to escape to Soviet Union after he failed to assassinate Mao on 13 September 1970. Mao Zedong himself died on 9 September 1976 after he designated a new successor, Hua Guofeng to carry on his revolutionary ideas. Hua Guofeng main policy was the famous “Two Whatevers.”⁹⁴ The main content of the policy was, “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave.”⁹⁵ Instead of supporting the radicals, Hua arrested the Gang of Four and restored Deng Xiaoping back to power from his exile. This was perhaps Hua’s biggest political blunder since Deng had more party connections and skills to outshine Hua and which eventually led to Hua’s downfall. Deng Xiaoping ousted Hua from power and established himself as the supreme leader of China in the 1978 CCP third plenary session of the 11th CCP Central Committee. Deng famously announced the principle of “seeking truth from the facts” in an attempt to criticize Mao’s dogmatism and hollow theoretical debates.⁹⁶ Seeking truth from the facts was the basis of Deng’s reform and opening policy, Deng also brought new third generation leaders under his wing such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. China’s elites were now mainly composed of reform-minded leaders with Deng as paramount leader and Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang as members of the elite politburo. They believed that China need to free itself from camp based foreign policy constraints and pursue a pragmatic approach in order to propel China toward

⁹⁴ John Gitting, “Hua Guofeng,” *The Guardian*, 20 August 2008, accessed 3 December 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/21/china>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Xing Lu, *An Ideological/Cultural Analysis of Political Slogans in Communist China* (London: Sage Publication, Discourse Society, 1999), 500.

modernization. China had transformed into a normal state which pursues rational cost and benefit analysis for its national interest rather than vague communist fraternal solidarity ideas.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF KIM JONG-IL ERA (1995-2011)

Kim Jong-il Visited China (Strengthened #3, 2000)

The number of high-level contacts between China and North Korea declined considerably due to the 1992 PRC-ROK normalization and death of Kim Il-sung in 1994. Although regular military-to-military visits continued, the close cooperation seems to have given way to symbolism. A Strained relationship was also reflected in an appreciable decline in the frequency and level of mutual visits by political leaders in the post-Kim Il-sung years. For more than a decade, neither Jiang Zemin nor Kim Jong-il found it politically important or convenient to negotiate the short distance between Beijing and Pyongyang (only one hour away by plane) for a summit meeting.⁹⁷

Kim Jong-il secretly visited China on 29-31 May 2000. Kim's unprecedented March visit to the PRC Embassy in Pyongyang and the cancellation in early May of National People's Congress Chairman Li Peng's planned visit to Pyongyang were clear precursors to the late May visit. However, the DPRK demand for secrecy and the sensitive party-to-party nature of arrangements kept even many Chinese foreign ministry officials out of the loop in advance of Kim Jong-il's arrival in Beijing. Reporters in Beijing were reduced to searching for special train cars at the Beijing train station and noting that special tidying efforts had taken place at the DPRK Embassy in Beijing only a few days prior to Kim Jong-il's arrival. Even a Japanese Diet group staying at the same Daoyutai complex where Kim was hosted in Beijing failed to confirm the visit until after

⁹⁷ Samuel Kim, "The Future of China: PRC-ROK Relations," 271.

Kim had returned to North Korea. Perhaps most striking is that Kim Il-sung's secret visits to Beijing remained concealed for months, while the announcement regarding this meeting occurred only hours after Kim junior returned home.

Table 2. Mutual Visits by Top Leaders of the PRC-DPRK during Each Era		
Leader of Each Era	PRC's Top Leader Visited DPRK	DPRK's Top Leader Visited PRC
Kim Il-sung Era (1949-1994)	35 times	4 times (Deng Xiaoping)
Kim Jong-il Era (1994-2011)	7 times	2 times (Jiang Zemin 1, Hu Jintao 1)
Kim Jong-eun Era (2012-)	0	0

Source: Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "China-DPRK Relations: Bilateral Relations," People's Republic of China, accessed 12 May 2015, <http://kp.china-embassy.org/eng>.

Kim Jong-il made another visit on 15-20 January 2001. Kim made the visit at the invitation of Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of Communist Party of China Central Committee and PRC president. Talks between the two leaders were held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, after Kim made a four-day tour of Shanghai. Premier Zhu Rongji met Kim in Shanghai. Zhu accompanied him on a visit to the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center, Shanghai General Motors Automobile Company, and Shanghai Huahong NEC Electronic Company. Huang J., Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China, briefed the delegation on Shanghai's reform and opening-up drive, and accompanied Kim and other DPRK guests

to visit the Pudong New District, Shanghai Stock Exchange, Shanghai Bao Steel, Zhangjiang High-tech Park and Sunqiao Modern Agricultural Development Zone.⁹⁸

Kim Jong-il's two visits to China after a decade of lost contacts symbolized some important aspects. First, Kim Jong-il made positive comments regarding China's own economic success, while indicating that the DPRK would pursue economic policies in accordance with its own characteristics. Second, he visited the Chinese Legend Computer company and was reportedly impressed with what he saw. Third, the Chinese leadership had the opportunity to provide direct explanations of the Chinese reform model; presumably emphasizing that economic reforms can be carried out in a gradual manner without creating massive pressure for accompanying political reforms.⁹⁹ Fourth, Kim Jong-il restored the party-to-party contacts and security alliance between China and North Korea.

North Korea's Second Nuclear Crisis (Weakened #3, 2002)

The second of North Korea's nuclear crises was triggered when U.S Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs James Kelly visited Pyongyang. During the visit, Kelly informed "The Bold Approach" that North Korea could improve bilateral relations through a "comprehensive settlement" addressing issues including North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, export of missile components, conventional

⁹⁸ Scott Snyder, "Jiang Zemin Met with Kim Jong-il," Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed 2 April 2015, <http://www.north-korea.narod.ru/visit.htm>.

⁹⁹ Scott Snyder, "China-Korea Relations: Beijing at the Center Stage or Upstaged by the Two Kims?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed 2 April 2015, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0002qchina_korea.pdf.

force posture, human rights violations, and their humanitarian situation.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the U.S. special envoy informed First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju and Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-Kwan that Washington was aware of a secret North Korean program to produce Highly-Enriched Uranium.¹⁰¹

On 16 October 2002, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher stated that “North Korea’s secret nuclear weapon program is a serious violation of its commitment under the Agreed Framework as well as under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement, and the Joint North-South Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”¹⁰² Boucher also said that the United States wanted North Korea to comply with its nonproliferation commitments and to seek “a peaceful resolution of this situation.”¹⁰³

However, North Korea argued that it only admitted to having a plan to produce nuclear weapons, which Pyongyang claimed was part of its right to self-defense, while the NPT allows states the right to use nuclear energy for civilian purposes. In the meantime, relating to suspicion over the Highly-Enriched Uranium program, there were

¹⁰⁰ Paul Kerr, “North Korea Chronology: Arms Control Today,” Arms Control Association, 1 June 2003, accessed 8 March 2015, <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/1308>.

¹⁰¹ Nuclear Threat Initiative, “About,” accessed 7 April 2015, http://www.nti.org/b_aboutnti/b_index.html.

¹⁰² Kerr.

¹⁰³ Richard Boucher, “North Korean Nuclear Program,” U.S. Department of State, 16 October 2002, accessed 24 March 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/14432.htm>.

some possibilities of miscommunication and misunderstanding between the two sides or mistakes occurred during the interpretation process.

Eventually, the United States responded in December 2002 by suspending heavy oil shipments. North Korea retaliated by lifting the freeze, and announcing its withdrawal from NPT on 10 January 2003. As a result, the second North Korean nuclear crisis broke out after both sides defaulted. North Korea's quest for a nuclear weapon program directly opposed China's national interest of no instability and no nuke in the Korean Peninsula. China did recognize that North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons might well promote nuclear proliferation in South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.¹⁰⁴ It coincides with the policy of denuclearization of nations and the region.

¹⁰⁴ Zhu Feng, "China's Foreign Mediation and the Six-Party Talks in North Korean Nuclear Problem," *Foreign Affairs Review* (April 2008): 22-30.

Table 3. Timeline of the Second North Korean Nuclear Crisis	
Time	Events
3-5 October 2002	U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly presses the North on suspicions that it is continuing to pursue a nuclear energy and missiles program.
16 October 2002	The U.S. announces that North Korea admitted in their talks to a secret nuclear arms program.
14 November 2002	U.S. President George W Bush declares November oil shipments to the North will be the last if the North does not agree to put a halt to its weapons ambitions.
11 December 2002	North Korean-made Scud missiles are found aboard a ship bound for Yemen, provoking American outrage.
13 December 2002	North asks the UN's IAEA to remove seals and surveillance equipment - the IAEA's "eyes and ears" on the North's nuclear status - from its Yongbyon power plant.
6 January 2003	The IAEA passes a resolution demanding that North Korea readmit UN inspectors and abandon its secret nuclear weapons program "within weeks", or face possible action by the UNSC.
10 January 2003	North Korea announces withdrawal from the Nuclear NPT.

Source: Created by author.

China's Nuclear Disarmament Policy has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. China unconditionally chose not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or

nuclear-weapon-free zones, and has consistently urged all nuclear-weapon states to enshrine these commitments in a legal form.¹⁰⁵

In line with its no nuke and no instability policies, China acted as mediator between North Korea and the United States. The Chinese government not only conveyed information to each party but also persuaded the two parties to sit down to begin talks. The Chinese government even took unprecedented measures to exert pressure upon North Korea. It is worth notice that North Korea accepted the proposal of China-United States-North Korea talks in Beijing soon after the Chinese oil-pipeline to North Korea suspended operation for three days for technical reasons in April 2003.

The Six-Party Talks which consisted of North Korea, South Korea, China, United States, Japan, and Russia began in 2003 and finally achieved a significant result in the fourth round of the talks in 2005. The fourth round produced a September 2005 pact: Pyongyang agreed to rejoin the NPT, abandon its nuclear weapon program, and allow IAEA monitors to return to North Korea. In exchange, North Korea would receive food and energy assistance from other parties. The accord also paved the way for diplomatic normalization between Pyongyang-Washington and Pyongyang-Tokyo, and negotiation for a peace agreement in Korean Peninsula.¹⁰⁶ However, the negotiation was faltering due to the U.S. Treasury Department freezing the North Korean bank account in Banco Delta Asia Macau in suspicion for money laundering activity. North Korea retaliated by

¹⁰⁵ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *White Paper on China's National Defense* (Beijing: People's Republic of China, December 2002), accessed 7 April 2015, <http://china.org.cn/e-white/20021209/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle against American Power* (Malta: Guttenberg Press, 2005), 120.

conducting an underground nuclear test in 2006. In response, China agreed to support UNSC Resolution 1718 to impose sanctions on Pyongyang for underground nuclear test. Beijing still showed support for North Korea. Beijing only agreed to UNSC Resolution 1718 after revisions that removed requirements for tough economic sanctions beyond those targeting luxury goods.

Beijing managed to persuade Pyongyang to resume the Six-Party Talks in 2007. In February 2007, during the sixth round of Six-Party Talks, North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear program and in return, the United States removed North Korea's status as state sponsor of terrorism and unfroze North Korea's account in Banco Delta Asia. However, in 2008, Pyongyang failed to heed the verification protocol of its nuclear program dismantlement, which led to the deadlock of Six-Party Talks.

North Korea conducted a series of provocations in 2009. First, it undertook an underground nuclear test and test launched its short-range missiles in May 2009. North Korea's activities were a direct violation to the UNSC Resolution 1718. The UNSC imposed Resolution, 1874, with stricter sanctions. China supported the resolution but also urged peaceful resolution and dialogue to dissolve the tension.

In 2010, once more Pyongyang brought the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war. It violated the Armistice Agreement by sinking the South Korean warship *Cheonan* in May and shelling Yeonpyong Island in November 2010. An investigation was conducted for the *Cheonan* sinking and evidences strongly suggested that a North Korean submarine torpedo was the culprit behind the attack. China, along with Russia, refused to accept the findings, meaning that the UNSC could only issue a vaguely worded statement. In response to the Yeonpyong Island shelling, China refused to condemn North Korea;

instead, China sent senior diplomats to both Pyongyang and Seoul in order to mediate the issue.¹⁰⁷

Then why did North Korea violate China's interest by throwing the region into the state of chaos and instability by developing nuclear weapons? Kim Jong-il came to power in North Korea after his father's death in 1994. He inherited a country in shambles due to decades of economic mismanagement, which resulted in negative economic growth from 1990 to 1998. The years from 1995 to 1997 were named the period of "arduous march," and the year of 1998 was named, "the desperate march for socialism," reflecting the nation's desperate economic situation.¹⁰⁸ North Korea was viewed as a failed state by the outside world, which was ready to collapse at any time. Kim Jong-il wished to surmount the crisis in every field—politically, economically, diplomatically, and in national security—by pivoting to the military. He created the Seongun Jongchi or Military First Policy to secure his regime. In addition, after the official launch of Kim Jong-il's regime in September 1998, Kim announced his Powerful and Prosperous Nation program with the optimistic vision of a positive future. This consists of an ideologically strong state with Juche, a politically strong state with independent foreign policies, a militarily strong state based on self-defense military power, and an economically strong state through self-sufficient national economy.

The international setting was also not in favor of Kim Jong-il. Following the visit of Vice Marshal Jo Myong-Rok to Washington in the fall of 2000, the two nations issued

¹⁰⁷ Peter M. Beck, "North Korea in 2010," *Asian Survey* 51, no. 1 (2010): 34.

¹⁰⁸ Ik-Pyo Hong, "A Shift Toward Capitalism?: Recent Economic Reforms in North Korea," *East Asian Review* 14, no. 4 (2002): 98.

a joint communiqué on 12 October, pledging to take steps to improve relations, including enhanced economic ties, resolving the missile issue, and advancing the Geneva Agreed Framework. However, the Clinton administration had difficulties in securing the budget authority for provision of 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil per year from the US Congress. George W. Bush came to power in January 2001. He reversed Clinton's policy of engagement by ABC"—Anything But Clinton. Immediately after the 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks, Bush changed his policy toward Korea to containment policy. Bush labeled North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as the Axis of Evil and state sponsors of terrorism on January 2002. Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and toppled the Saddam Hussein regime despite later findings that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Kim Jong-il learned from the Iraq case that the best policy to insure the survival of an increasingly isolated North Korea in a hostile international environment is by developing nuclear weapons. Kim Jong-il meant to use nuclear weapons to improve the country's deterrence capability and as a bargaining chip. Nuclear weapons are an essential part of Kim Jong-il's brinkmanship strategy to extract aid from the international community. Kim would use the nuclear weapon card to increase the level of tension to the brink of war. In the midst of tension, North Korea would then offer talks and dialogue where then it can force the international community to grant North Korea concessions and thus prolong regime survival.

Kim Jong-il Visited China (Strengthened #4, 2011)

In light of the second North Korea nuclear crisis in 2003 and North Korea's formal adoption of military first policy, China-North Korea relations were again in decline. The second nuclear crisis seriously harmed China's strategic interest to stop

nuclear proliferation in the region. Meanwhile, the military first policy made North Korea stray from the communist party line. Kim Jong-il gave the military a tremendous amount of power and privilege compared to the party. He ruled the country with the title of Head of the National Defense Commission not as the General Secretary of KWP. In North Korea, the gun controls the party, meanwhile in China, the party controls the gun. Party-to-party channels were once again in decline.

Kim Jong-il traveled to China from 20-27 May 2011, his third visit in a year. He held talks with President Hu Jintao on political and security cooperation and with Premier Wen Jiabao on economic cooperation. First, North Korea and China decided to double their economic cooperation at a time of mutual need. North Korea sought China's cooperation in its economic development so that it could exploit Beijing's experience in reform and opening. More concretely, North Korea wanted China's help in developing the Rason Economic and Trade Zone (formerly Rajin-Sonbong) near the estuary of the Tumen River and the Hwanggumpyong Economic Zone (Sinuiju) at the estuary of the Yalu River.¹⁰⁹

Second, North Korea's efforts to secure Chinese economic cooperation have been readily linked to and exploited by Beijing's own economic development plans that also require North Korea's cooperation for success. A key component of China's plan to develop the Northeastern Provinces is the development of the Changjitu (Changchun-Jilin-Tumen) Regional Border Zone, which includes cross-border trade and economic cooperation with North Korea. The Rason and Hwanggumpyong economic zones are planned to be linked to the Changjitu and Changchun-Shenyang-Dalian/Dandong zones,

¹⁰⁹ Snyder, "China-Korea Relations."

respectively. Dandong, lying on the border between China and North Korea at the estuary of the Yalu River, has been designated as a major export production center in China's Liaoning Province and is expected to fully exploit opportunities opened by Hwanggumpyong.¹¹⁰

Third, in addition to economic cooperation, North Korea and China have decided to bolster cooperation on security issues, specifically with respect to the North Korean nuclear problem and the problem of war and peace in the Korean Peninsula. Kim Jong-il, expressing appreciation towards China's efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks and to safeguard peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, called for the early resumption of the Six-Party Talks. President Hu Jintao positively acknowledged North Korea's efforts to ease tension on the Korean Peninsula and to improve the external environment for peace and stability. Kim reiterated North Korea's hopes to ease tensions on the peninsula, its promise to denuclearize, and its wish to see improvement in inter-Korean relations.

Fourth, the problem of war and peace in Korea has been closely connected to the North Korean nuclear issue. Pyongyang has previously used the nuclear card many times to bring the United States to the negotiation table to discuss ending the Korean War, signing a formal peace treaty, and normalizing relations with the United States for North Korea's survival and development. North Korea has made it clear that the quid pro quo for denuclearization is none other than the establishment of a peace regime in Korea. It is noteworthy that North Korea has consistently prioritized the issue of peace regime in

¹¹⁰ Haksoon Paik, "Kim Jong-il Visit to China: Implications for East Asia and the United States," 38 North, 5 June 2011, accessed 7 April 2015, <http://38north.org/2011/06/paik060511>.

setting agendas for the negotiations with the United States, such as it did after conducting its second nuclear test in May 2009.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF KIM JONG-EUN ERA (2012~)

Third North Korea's Nuclear Crisis (Weakened #4, 2013)

Background and Chronology of the Third North Korea Nuclear Crisis

On 12 December 2012, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung, North Korea test launched an Unha-3 missile into space. Thus, the North Korea missile test was clearly a direct violation of the UNSC resolutions. Between the years of 2006 and 2009, the UNSC imposed two sanctions, Resolution 1718 (2006) and 1874 (2009). These sanctions prohibited North Korea from conducting nuclear tests or launching ballistic missiles, requested that it abandon all future efforts to pursue nuclear weapons and urged it to return to negotiations with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States, the so-called Six-Party Talks. The resolutions also imposed embargoes on large-scale arms, weapons-related research and development materials, and luxury goods; banned many types of financial transactions including transfers of cash; placed new restrictions on diplomats; and created monitoring mechanisms for enforcement.¹¹¹

The North Korean government said the launch was solely to put a satellite into orbit, denying that it was a military trial. On 22 January, the North Korean government proceeded to register it with the UN stating that it is an observation satellite designed to monitor the Earth's crops, forest resources, and natural disasters. However, North

¹¹¹ United Nations Security Council, "United Nations Security Council Resolutions," accessed 13 April 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2013.shtml>.

Korea's missile test invited criticism and strong protests from the international society. The United States called it a "highly provocative act that threatens regional security"; while UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, it was a "clear violation" of the UN resolution.¹¹² Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei said that China regretted DPRK's action but at the same time called for the concerned parties to stay "cool-headed" and that negotiation should be the priority to deal with the issue.¹¹³

After the launch, at the request of Japan, the United States, and South Korea, the UNSC held a meeting to discuss the event and as a result, issued a presidential statement in which the fifteen council members felt that the launch had been a ballistic missile test. Finally, on 22 January 2013, the UNSC agreed to punish North Korea for the launch of the satellite; it passed Resolution 2087. It condemned North Korea's ballistic missile test, ordered North Korea not to proceed with more missile tests, and demanded North Korea comply with the previous Resolutions 1718 and 1874. For their part, North Korea denounced the UNSC sanctions, stating they were imposed under the sponsorship of the United States to disrupt the North's economic and technological development, by saying the rocket technology used to launch satellites is the same as used for ballistic missiles.

Following the UNSC resolution, North Korea announced the continuation of their tests not only devoted to missiles, but clearly with an effort to facilitate nuclear weapons purposes. Moreover, North Korea directly threatened the United States, announcing that

¹¹² BBC News, "North Korea Defies Warning in Rocket Launch Success," 12 December 2012, accessed 10 April 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20690338>.

¹¹³ People's Republic of China, "Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 December 2012, accessed 13 April 2015, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t997918.htm>.

they could launch long-range missiles against that country. North Korea called the United States the sworn enemy of the Korean people.

Despite strong protests against its missile launch, North Korea threw the region into panic with its underground nuclear test on 12 February 2013. Pyongyang said that the test was an act of “self-defense” against U.S. hostility and threatened stronger steps if necessary.¹¹⁴ North Korea said the test had “greater explosive force” than those it conducted in 2006 and 2009.¹¹⁵ Its KCNA news agency said it had used a “miniaturized” and lighter nuclear device, indicating it had again used plutonium, which is suitable for use in a missile warhead.¹¹⁶ China, which has shown signs of increasing exasperation with the recent bellicose tone of its reclusive neighbor, summoned the North Korean Ambassador in Beijing and protested sternly, the Foreign Ministry said. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said China was “strongly dissatisfied and resolutely opposed” to the test and urged North Korea to “stop any rhetoric or acts that could worsen situations and return to the right course of dialogue and consultation as soon as possible.”¹¹⁷

On 11 March 2013, the situation in the Korean Peninsula was becoming increasingly tense when South Korea and the U.S. Army decided to conduct its annual military training, event, Key Resolve/Foal Eagle 2013, despite warning and strong opposition from North Korea. Pyongyang strongly condemned the joint military exercise

¹¹⁴ David Chance and Jack Kim, “North Korea’s Nuclear Test Draws Anger, including China,” *Reuters*, 12 February 2013, accessed 13 April 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/12/us-korea-north-idUSBRE91B048201302>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

calling it “attack rehearsals” that were “driving the situation of the Korean Peninsula to a nuclear war.”¹¹⁸ A few days later, on 13 March, North Korea declared that it had scrapped the sixty-year-old armistice agreement ending the Korean War, and warned that the next step was an act of merciless military retaliation against the enemy. Voiding the cease-fire agreement means theoretically the way is open to the resumption of hostilities and leading to a state of war in the Korean Peninsula.¹¹⁹ North Korea threatened the United States with the possibility of thermo nuclear war by targeting U.S. bases in Guam and Hawaii, which sit in the range of North Korea’s missiles.

The U.S. government seriously responded to North Korea’s threats of nuclear war. On 15 March, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that the United States would increase missiles defense systems capabilities against possible limited intercontinental ballistic missile attack from North Korea and Iran. On 28 March, the U.S. government dispatched B-52 bombers, which are capable of deploying nuclear weapons on North Korea, from Guam to overfly to South Korean territory for the ongoing Foal Eagle Exercise. It symbolized the U.S. capability of maintaining a continuous bomber presence in the region. North Korea responded by severing the military hotline between North and South Korea on 27 March. It was the last remaining communication link between the two countries.

¹¹⁸ BBC News, “US and South Korea Wrap up ‘Foal Eagle’ Military Drills,” 30 April 2013, accessed 20 April 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22348488>.

¹¹⁹ AFP, “North Korea Confirms End of War Armistice,” *Bangkok Post*, 13 March 2013, accessed 30 April 2015, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/340276/north-korea-confirms-end-of-war-armistice>.

On 30 March, North Korea declared a “state of war” against South Korea.¹²⁰ A North Korean statement promised “stern physical actions” against “any provocative act.”¹²¹ North Korean leader Kim Jong-eun declared that rockets were ready to be fired at American bases in the Pacific. This was in response to two nuclear-capable American B-52 stealth bombers flying over the Korean Peninsula on 28 March.

On 5 April, North Korea warned multiple countries, including the United Kingdom, Russia, and Sweden, that they should evacuate their embassies by 10 April. North Korea also issued the same warning to the foreigners living in South Korea, saying that war with South Korea could break out at any time soon. China’s new President, Xi Jinping, made a statement regarding the tension in the Korean Peninsula on 7 April. He said, “No one should be allowed to throw a region and even the whole world into chaos for selfish gains.”¹²² Avoiding mentioning North Korea by name, Xi said, “While pursuing its own interests, a country should accommodate the legitimate interests of others.”¹²³ Xi said the international community and its collective scrutiny should act as a platform for common development rather than an “arena where gladiators fight each other.”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ BBC News, “Timeline: North Korea Nuclear Stand-off,” 2 April 2013, accessed 24 April 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11811861>.

¹²¹ BBC News, “North Korea Enters ‘State of War’ with South,” 30 March 2013, accessed 24 April 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21979880>.

¹²² William Wan, “Chinese President Xi Jinping Expresses Concern over North Korea’s Rhetoric,” *Washington Post*, 7 April 2013.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

On 9 April, North Korean workers did not report to work in Kaesong Industrial Complex. In protest of anti-North Korean demonstrations in Seoul, which burned North Korean leaders' effigies and pictures, the North Korean government removed 53,000 workers from the Complex, which effectively shut down all activities of 123 South Korean small and medium enterprises. Kaesong Industrial Complex is the only remaining place for inter-Korean cooperation and exchanges; its closing symbolized the end of any contacts between the two Koreas.

Table 4. Timeline of the Third North Korean Nuclear Crisis	
Time	Events
12 December 2012	North Korea test launched the Unha-3 missiles.
22 January 2013	UNSC passed Resolution 2087, condemning the missiles test and ordered North Korea to adhere the previous resolutions.
12 February 2013	North Korea conducted underground nuclear test, China condemn the test.
11 March 2013	U.S.-ROK started joint military drill.
13 March 2013	North Korea scrapped the Armistice Agreement.
27 March 2013	North Korea severed military hot line with South Korea.
30 March 2013	North Korea declared state of war.
5 April 2013	North Korea warned foreigners to leave Korean Peninsula.
7 April 2013	Xi Jinping made a statement regarding the crisis.
9 April 2013	North Korea shut down Kaesong Industrial Complex

Source: Created by author.

Negative Feedback on the Third North Korea's Nuclear Crisis

The PRC-North Korea alliance treaty clearly stated in Article 1 the importance of maintaining world peace in the region and in Article 4 that two states shall consult with each other on all-important international issues of common interest. North Korea's saber-rattling behaviors clearly brought the region to the brink of war and increased hostilities between North Korea and U.S. allied forces. Since Kim Jong-eun came to power in 2011, he has not visited China or met with its new leader, Xi Jinping. In the case of the missile launch in 2012 and nuclear test in 2013, North Korea did not consult with China regarding its plan. North Korea was fully aware that its tests would cause instability in the region and the matter of instability touches China's core strategic interest. What would be the interest of North Korea in raising tension by provocations and nuclear test?

What North Korea wants to achieve in a line of provocative actions against South Korea and the United States are multi-faceted: to consolidate Kim Jong-eun's regime by exaggerating external security threats; to show North Korea's military ability and preparedness, especially with nuclear capacity to deter so-called antagonistic policy of South Korea and the United States; to improve the North Korea negotiating position vis-à-vis the United States for the possible subsequent round of negotiation; to deliver the message that North Korea will not accept the hardline policy of the new South Korean administration.

First, Kim Jong-eun would like to consolidate his domestic power by exaggerating external security threats. There are fundamental differences and conditions in which Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-eun came to power. Kim Jong-il was selected as a successor for his father, Kim Il-sung, at the Central Committee Plenum of the KWP in

February 1974, and the succession became public at the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980. On the other hand, Kim Jong-eun reportedly became the successor of his father, Kim Jong-il, in late 2008 or early 2009.¹²⁵ North Korea made the succession official at the Third Party Conference in September 2010. Kim Jong-il had roughly twenty years to show his leadership skills and receive grooming from Kim Il-sung; meanwhile, Kim Jong-eun only had about fifteen months after his nomination. Kim Jong-il demonstrated his organizational skill to Kim Il-sung and other North Korean leaders by successfully guiding the preparation of the Fifth Congress of KWP in November 1970. Kim Jong-il's proven leadership and skills in propaganda activities gave him widespread acceptance among North Korean leaderships.¹²⁶ Unlike the case of Kim Il-sung-Kim Jong-il succession, Kim Jong-eun did not have the chance to demonstrate his leadership skills before his succession was made official in 2010. Since the early stage of his succession period, Kim Jong-il managed to thwart any political rivalries that might harm his position and established his support group from people of similar ages, while Kim Jong-eun is surrounded by people from a much older generation. In an apparent attempt to get rid of his father's political legacies and flex his authority, Kim Jong-eun has purged a number of high-ranking officials including his own uncle, Jang Song-Taek. Ri-Yong Ho, Kim Yong-Chun, and Kim Jong-Gak were handpicked to groom Kim Jong-eun and were close

¹²⁵ Jae-Cheon Lim, "North Korea's Hereditary Succession: Comparing Two Key Transitions in the DPRK," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 3 (May/June 2012): 550.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 560.

confidants of Kim Jong-il. They have either been demoted or disappeared. Kim Jong-eun replaced them with people who are only loyal to him, not to his father.¹²⁷

Kim Jong-eun also tried to live up to his title as the Supreme Commander of the KPA and gain support from the army. He would like to demonstrate that he is also capable of challenging the international world, especially the United States and South Korea, and that North Korea is militarily capable and ready to defend, or attack if necessary, itself from any potential threats. In the first quarter of 2013, Kim Jong-eun's participation in military related activities increased. Kim Jong-eun visited Army brigades of KPA Unit 323 on 31 January, guided artillery exercises on 27 February, observed military exercises on 4 March, visited Jangjae Islet and Mu Islet on 8 March, again for the second time visited Mu and Jangjae Islet on 15 March, and inspected KPA Unit 1501 on 25 March 2013.

Second, North Korea showed signs of change in its strategic line. After plenary meeting of Workers' Party Central Committee on 31 March 2013, the party declared that it took "a decisive turn in accomplishing revolutionary cause of Juche as required by the present situation and the developing revolution."¹²⁸ The party argued that it "set forth a new strategic line on carrying out economic construction and building nuclear armed forces simultaneously under the prevailing situation and to meet the legitimate

¹²⁷ Jae-Cheon Lim, 561.

¹²⁸ North Korean Leadership Watch, "Report on Plenary Meeting of KWP Central Committee," Wordpress, 31 March 2013, accessed 5 April 2015, <https://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/2013/03/31/party-central-committee-convenes-plenary-meeting/>.

requirement of the developing revolution.”¹²⁹ Also they held that the party’s new line is not temporary countermeasure for coping with rapidly changing situation but a strategic line to be always held fast to, in the supreme interests of the Korean revolution.¹³⁰

The party further declared, “the nuclear weapons of Seongun (Military First) Korea are not goods for getting U.S. Dollars and they are neither a political bargaining chip nor a thing for economic dealings to be presented to the place of dialogue or be put on the table of negotiations aimed at forcing DPRK to disarm itself.”¹³¹ This new strategic line is different from the Kim Jong-il era. Kim Jong-il strived for the so-called Strong and Prosperous Great Country with nuclear weapons as one of the core policy measures but negotiable; North Korea would be willing to give up nuclear weapons with the right deals. With Kim Jong-eun in power, the new strategic line put great emphasis on nuclear weapons state. In the “Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State Adopted,” North Korea declared that it is a “a full-fledged nuclear weapon state capable of beating back any aggressor troops at one strike, firmly defending the socialist system and providing a sure guarantee for the happy life of the people.”¹³² Therefore, nuclear weapons are no longer a bargaining chip but an inherent part of North Korea’s Army and defense system.

¹²⁹ North Korean Leadership Watch.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Korean Central News Agency of Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, “Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapon State Adopted,” Korean News Service, 1 April 2013, accessed 3 May 2015, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201304/news01/20130401-25ee.html>.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this study, there are several key periods (strengthened and weakened junctures) in the PRC-North Korea alliance from the Kim Il-sung era to the Kim Jong-eun era, which are examined using the historical comparative analysis in order to assess the continuities and discontinuities of PRC-DPRK alliance in the future.

Table 5. Key Periods of PRC-DPRK Alliance				
Kim Il-sung Era (1949-1994)				
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5
Initial Conditions (~Feb 1956)	Strengthened 1 (Jul 11, 1961)	Weakened 1 (Oct 1966)	Strengthened 2 (Oct 1970)	Weakened 2 (Aug 1992)
(Khrushchev's Secret Speech)	PRC-DPRK Signed Alliance Treaty	Chinese Cultural Revolution	Zhou Enlai Visit to Pyongyang	PRC-ROK Normalization
Kim Jong-il Era (1995-2011)			Kim Jong-eun Era (2012~)	
Time 6	Time 7	Time 8	Time 9	
Strengthened 3 (Jan 6, 2000)	Weakened 3 (Oct 2002)	Strengthened 4 (May 2011)	Weakened 4 (Feb 2013)	
Kim Jong-il Visited China	North Korea's Second Nuclear Crisis	Kim Jong-il Visited China	Third North Korea's Nuclear Crisis	

Source: Created by author.

First, this study examines the initial conditions of the PRC-North Korea alliance. The initial conditions were not suitable for the conclusion of the PRC-North Korea

alliance. First, the security environment was stable thus; PRC and DPRK did not feel the need to conclude any alliance. Second, the PRC-North Korea relationship was deteriorating due to disputes during the Korean War and the August incident in 1956. However, a single event in 1956 changed the trajectory of PRC-North Korea relations. That contingent event was Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 20th Party Congress which criticized Mao and Kim Il-sung's cult of personality. That event released the political constraints in both China and North Korea and created the strengthened period of their alliance. During this period, PRC and DPRK decided to opt for the adoption of PRC-North Korea treaty of friendship in 1961. It is a critical juncture beyond which states cannot undo their adoption.

The first weakened period of alliance was during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1966. The elites in China drastically changed from those reform minded leaders, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, to the radicals. The radicals finally damaged the PRC-North Korea alliance by its use of rhetoric and criticism toward Kim Il-sung. Kim Il-sung also found it more beneficial to him to lean to Moscow. With Leonid Brezhnev in power, the Soviet Union changed its attitude toward North Korea and gave North Korea more economic aids as result. However, China and North Korea soon amended, marked by Zhou Enlai's visit to North Korea in 1970. Zhou Enlai apologized personally to Kim Il-sung for what happened during the Cultural Revolution. This event explained why China and North Korea strengthened the alliance. First, there was a large set-up cost to establish the alliance especially on the Chinese side. China sacrificed thousands of soldiers and a vast amount of materials to save North Korea in the Korean War, and after that helped North Korea to rebuild its country with continuous streams of economic and political aid.

China also could not afford to have conflict with North Korea, due to PRC-Soviet Union split and the PRC-U.S. confrontation in Vietnam in the 1970s. Personal relations of the leaders also contributed to the improvement of the relationship, since they had known each other more than twenty-five years already.

The second weakened period of alliance was PRC-ROK normalization. China pursued a pragmatic foreign policy after it decided to open and reform in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping. North Korea lost in economic competition with South Korea. There was also exogenous shock in the system with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In addition, the leadership in China also became more pragmatic oriented under Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. The third strengthened period of alliance was Kim Jong-il's secret visit to Beijing in 2000. After a lost decade of almost no summit meeting between China and North Korea, Kim Jong-il's visit symbolized rapprochement in the PRC-North Korea alliance. Kim was willing to maintain the relationship due to the learning process available in the alliance. Kim could learn the Chinese development model and apply it to North Korea. During early 2000s, China also supplied North Korea with the much needed food and fuel, and Kim Jong-il was too aware not to lose it. The third weakened period of alliance was the second North Korean nuclear crisis in 2002. Due to an increasingly hostile environment and U.S. foreign policy, Kim Jong-il decided to develop nuclear weapons in order to ensure his regime survival but at the same time, this move damaged his relationship with China. The relationship could only be amended when Kim Jong-il again visited China in May 2011, and once again reaffirmed PRC-North Korea alliance with Hu Jintao.

The fourth weakened period of alliance was the third North Korean nuclear crisis in 2013. North Korea was fully aware that its tests would cause instability in the region and the matter of instability touches China's core strategic interest. Under Kim Jong-eun, North Korea is trying to consolidate its power by showing strong provocations externally. Kim also adopted a new strategic line by incorporating nuclear weapons not as bargaining chips, but as an inseparable part of North Korea's status.

Considering the historical development of their alliance, the PRC-DPRK alliance is not just the goal but also the means, and the ultimate purpose is about protection and extended security interests. The DPRK signed a treaty with China to defend internal and external security interests. Thus, to grasp the meaning and possibility for changing of the PRC-DPRK alliance, it will be necessary to consider the international security environment between the time the alliance was established and today. In addition, potential benefit and potential cost of alliance relations of two countries should be considered.

PRC-DPRK Potential Benefit and Cost Analysis

Unlike at the time of establishing of PRC-DPRK alliance, the United Soviet Socialist Republic, which was considered a direct security threat to China has collapsed and dissolved. China has developed market capitalism system and taken the path of reform and opening. Moreover, China set up the diplomatic relations with the ROK in 1992 and is pursuing in-depth strategic cooperation on a variety of matters at the global level with the United States, which had long been hostile to China. The ideological connection and string of human solidarity which has been an important link in China's

bilateral relations with the DPRK are now being weakened. In considering these facts, PRC-DPRK alliance could already be seen as the superficial alliance.

However, a stable DPRK's regime is still China's highest priority policy and China has expressed indirect supports to the DPRK's hereditary succession regime. Also, China is continuing to cover the DPRK on occur incidents such as the DPRK's armed forces *Cheonan* ship sinking and Yeonpyeong Island shelling. Rather, China expressed a vigorous resistance to the U.S.-ROK joint training, which resulted in DPRK's provocations; saying that while deterring the DPRK, the U.S. is also trying to squeeze China's influence in the region. That is part of Washington's strategy to make a bold return to Asia. It is difficult to restart the Six-Party Talks under the current conditions and Beijing may have to make changes to its diplomatic approach. This opposing attitude to the ROK and the United States looks like a return to the Cold War.¹³³

A utilitarian explanation would address the calculation of cost and benefits among actors inside the institution. In order to predict the PRC-North Korea alliance based on the utilitarian explanation it is imperative to see in detail, what the potential benefits and what the costs are if China and North Korea abandon their alliance.

China's Potential Benefit

China's foreign policy evolved along with its domestic politics. During the Cold War China's main national target was to fulfill the revolutionary dream of establishing communism in one country and help revolutionary struggle outside the Chinese border.

¹³³ China estimated that to control and manage PRC-DPRK alliance is much better for their national interests rather than coping with DPRK's collapse and ther types of contingencies.

After the death of Mao Zedong and the rise of the pragmatic leaders in the CCP, China changed its course. It no longer pursues ideological goals but now national interests and pragmatic goals are the major driving force of the Chinese foreign policy. Domestically, communist ideology lost its appeal in China along with its modernization and opening to the outside world. Internationally, China is facing suspicion with its rising power both economically and militarily. In order to rebuke those suspicions and fear of its rise, China devised a new set of propaganda, so called the peaceful rise. China would like to promote itself as a responsible power to the world community especially in the Northeast Asia region. Along with this line of thought, China's national interest in the Korean Peninsula can be summarized as a state of affairs that is defined as no refugee, no instability, no unification, and no nukes.

Since North Korea lost its main support in 1989 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, its economy has been crippled. International communist countries collapsed one by one in a reversed domino effect. Kim Jong-il has watched in horror as his fellow dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu was dragged and executed by his own people. In order to avoid the similar fate and to maintain his regime, Kim has been developing nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip, thus the period of brinkmanship and nuclear provocations started in Korean Peninsula. Since the first nuclear crisis (1994) and the second nuclear crisis (2003), North Korea has created major instability and tension in the region by its provocations. China has been active to play a role as mediator, but it has also been accused of protecting and propping up the regime. China helped to facilitate the Six-Party Talks and persuaded North Korea to join in the negotiation, but on the other hand, China has also been very lenient in imposing sanctions against North Korea. For

example, Beijing only agreed to UNSC Resolution 1718 after revisions that removed requirements for tough economic sanctions beyond those targeting luxury goods. China also refused to condemn North Korea during the Cheonan sinking and Yeonpyeong Island shelling. China's image as the major backer of North Korea would not be beneficial for its peaceful rise campaign. It shows how China is still interested in protecting its own border and national interests in comparison to the common interest of regional peace and stability. However, what if China decided to abandon North Korea, what would be the benefits?

By abandoning North Korea, China would greatly improve its image as a responsible power. The notion of responsible power is important due to the inter-connectivity of the international society. Hedley Bull argued that international society exists when a group of powerful states recognizes that it shares certain common interests from which limited rules of coexistence can be derived, and exhibits willingness to share in the working institutions that maintain those arrangements.¹³⁴ The Hu Jintao regime, which was officially inaugurated in 2003, announced policies of Peaceful Rising in November 2003 and Peaceful Development in April 2004, aiming to advance the nation through policies of sustainable national development and creation of an advantageous international environment as a responsible power. These national strategies inherited the spirit of Deng Xiaoping's Peaceful Development and Jiang Zemin's New Security Concept and incorporated a sentiment of great-power chauvinism. The policy of peaceful development focused on minimizing conflicts and friction with the West and emphasized

¹³⁴ Rosemary Foot, "Chinese Power and the Idea of Responsible State," *The China Journal*, no. 45 (January 2001): 2.

a bigger role for China in order to fulfill its objective of rising to become a great and responsible power in the 21st century. The Hu Jintao regime adopted the Harmonious World foreign relations strategy, which promoted global co-prosperity and was closely linked to the expansion of China's foreign influence. Furthermore, since Xi Jinping took office, the weekly World Affairs issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry has publicized the ongoing transition of China's diplomacy from hiding its capacities and waiting for its time to act. Having been involved in international affairs actively and positively and emphasizing its image as a great responsible nation, China can hardly continue the blood league relationship with North Korea. In line with its peaceful rise policy aim to achieve the status of responsible power, China must recognize and contribute to the common interests shared by other countries in the Northeast Asia region. Those shared interests are stability and a nuclear free Korean Peninsula. North Korea's saber-rattling behaviors and its aim to possess nuclear weapons are clearly violating the rules of coexistence shared among the international community. China's contribution would be its sincere willingness to cooperate with the international community to punish and stop supporting the Kim regime in its endeavor for nuclear weapons.

Responsible power status means China would gain more trust from the other stakeholders in the Northeast Asia region including the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Trust would also mean less possibility for direct confrontation with the United States and more possibility for exchange and cooperation in the region.

China's Potential Cost

If China decided to abandon North Korea, it would mean that China would cancel the alliance treaty with North Korea and stop propping up the regime by supplying it with

food and fuel. China has provided North Korea with 100,000 tons of food, half a million tons of oil, and goods worth twenty million U.S. dollars as requested by the North yearly.

This is regular assistance separate from relief supplies that China sends in the event of disaster in the North or free aid given when a Chinese leader visits Pyongyang.¹³⁵ China's food aid has accounted for ninety percent of North Korea's total food consumption. Meanwhile, Chinese fuel aid is responsible for at least seventy percent of North Korea's total fuel consumption. North Korea totally depends on China for the survival of its regime. If China withdraws its support to North Korea, there are two potential scenarios that might happen: first, is the refugee inflow to China's border, and second is a possible military clash in the Korean Peninsula.

The first potential cost is the inflow of refugees to China. China and North Korea share a long mutual border along the Yalu and Tumen Rivers of at least 1,400 kilometers. There have been frequent North Korean defectors crossing the rivers in order to escape the oppression or hunger in North Korea. Since the early 1990s, especially during the North Korea's great famine 1995-1997, Beijing has faced an unwanted humanitarian problem due to the hundreds of thousands of North Korean defectors seeking safe haven in China. It is estimated that currently there are at least 20,000 to 30,000 North Korean defectors in China, which already created demographic and social problems in China's Northeastern provinces.

If the North Korean regime collapses, there will be at least twenty-five million people, among them 1.2 million armed soldiers and 3.5 million paramilitary soldiers, left

¹³⁵ The Dong-a Ilbo, "Scale of Chinese Yearly Aid to Pyongyang Unveiled," 24 June 2012, accessed 15 April 2015, <http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?biid=2012062508548>.

to their own fate. They would be forced out of North Korea due to hunger or armed conflicts that might ensue after the collapse of the regime. There are two countries, which shared borders with North Korea, China, and South Korea. The border between South Korea and North Korea is the DMZ along the 38th parallel. However, it is impossible for the refugees to cross to South Korea because the DMZ is highly fortified. There are high electric fences and scattered landmines along the DMZ plus a high concentration of South Korean soldiers guarding the border. The refugee's more likely option will be the Chinese-North Korean border, which is less guarded and longer.

No refugee is sitting on the top of the Chinese government priority list. The potential of not only civilian refugees, but also armed soldier refugees would definitely create large-scale civil unrest in China's Northeastern provinces, which shares the border with North Korea. Instability would likely trigger more massive widespread civil unrest in China since border regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet harbor a passion to gain independence from the PRC. Civil unrest would also directly undermine CCP legitimacy and control over the population.

The second potential cost would be military confrontation. With the collapse of Kim regime, there would be no one in charge of the nuclear weapons and the North Korean population at large. This critical situation might force South Korea along with the United States to implement their contingency plan for the purpose of securing nuclear weapons and restoring order in North Korea. The United States and South Korea would be likely to deploy their forces inside North Korea in the form of surgical attack or under the UNSC mandate. Meanwhile, in order to protect its border, China is highly likely to have their own contingency plan and deploy troops to North Korea. Both interventions in

North Korea would likely result in a military clash or limited armed conflict. The second scenario for military conflict would be a North Korean desperate attack on South Korea. Left without support from China and certain demise might cause North Korean leadership to act irrationally by invading South Korea. Either scenario of military conflict is highly undesirable for China. No instability or no war, also top China's priority list. Military conflict would disrupt economic and trade exchanges in the region. China could not afford to sacrifice its economic growth and development since CCP's legitimacy now rests solely on China's economic success. China would avoid war at all cost.

North Korea's Potential Benefit

North Korea's foreign policy during the period of Cold War, contrary to China, was mostly focusing on economic development and pragmatic purposes. North Korea's economy outperformed the South Korean economy until 1980 when an economic crisis took place in the North. North Korea's economic downturn in 1980 was largely due to the mismanagement of collective farming modeled after Stalin's agricultural collectivization and the over emphasis on heavy industry sectors.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, Pyongyang was threatened by South Korea's rapid economic development in the 1980s. In response, Kim Il-sung changed the focus of his foreign policy objectives to contain, isolate, and destabilize South Korea in the seemingly endless pursuit of absolute legitimation and Korean Unification on North Korean terms.¹³⁷ In light of the economic downturn, which led to the massive starvation in 1995 to 1997, China stepped in by providing food and

¹³⁶ Jasper Becker, *Rogue Regime: Kim Jong-il and the Threat of North Korea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.

¹³⁷ Kim, "The Future of China: PRC-ROK Relations," 57.

fuel aids to North Korea. Over time, China's aid grew and consequently China gained limited leverage to North Korea.

In 1992, China decided to adopt a Two-Korea policy by establishing formal diplomatic relations with South Korea. China was tempted by the potential large amount of investment and technology transfers, which South Korea offered. North Korea's interest was greatly undermined by this decision but nonetheless North Korea could not do anything because they were aware of China's importance for them. With its leverage China managed to force North Korea to join the Six-Party Talks negotiation in 2003 by temporarily cutting of its oil supply for three days.¹³⁸ Furthermore, China sent a clear message to North Korea to stop retaliating against the South in light of the Yeonpyeong Island incident. China halted the shipment of heavy oil to North Korea in fear that the situation in the Korean Peninsula might get out of control if North Korea continued to provoke the South.¹³⁹

It is evident that China, with its limited leverage is able to coerce North Korea to be in line with China's interest to a certain extent. If North Korea severed its relationship with China, the obvious advantage for North Korea is it can become more independent and free from Chinese pressure. North Korea would have more room to maneuver without being constrained by Chinese intervention.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Watts, "China Cuts Oil Supply to North Korea," *The Guardian*, 1 April 2003, accessed 17 April 2015, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/apr/01/northkorea.china>.

¹³⁹ Sunny Lee, "China Cut off Oil to Stop NK from Retaliating against the South," *Korea Times*, 19 January 2011, accessed 13 March 2015, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2011/01/117_79966.html.

North Korea's Potential Cost

The greatest loss North Korea would suffer if it abandoned China would be the loss of economic support. Currently, China is North Korea's biggest trading partner, running annual bilateral deficits of about \$500 million against North Korea. After diminishing in the late 1990s, the annual value of total DPRK-PRC bilateral trade has grown from a sixteen-year low of \$307 million in 1999 to a \$2.8 billion in 2008. The number doubled to \$6 billion in 2012 after the period of only four years. North Korea is also a net-importer of energy from China in the form of heavy fuel. Between 2000 and 2008, North Korean expenditure on imported Chinese crude oil increased more than fivefold to 250,000 ton annually.¹⁴⁰ China currently supplies seventy percent of North Korea's energy. Without preferential supports from China, North Korea is highly likely to collapse. The North Korean regime's top priority is to survive; amidst all international pressures and economic sanctions, their only help comes from China.¹⁴¹ Severing relations with China means certain doom for the regime.

¹⁴⁰ Nathaniel Aden, "North Korea Trade with China 1995-2009," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 23, no. 2 (June 2011): 233.

¹⁴¹ South Korea was once North Korea's biggest trading partner in 2007 following the Sunshine policy initiated by President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea. However, due to loss of the liberal government to the conservative government in 2008 and the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyong Island incidents in 2010, President Lee Myung Bak suspended all further inter-Korean investment, humanitarian aid, and trade to North Korea except the trade in Gaesong Industrial Complex.

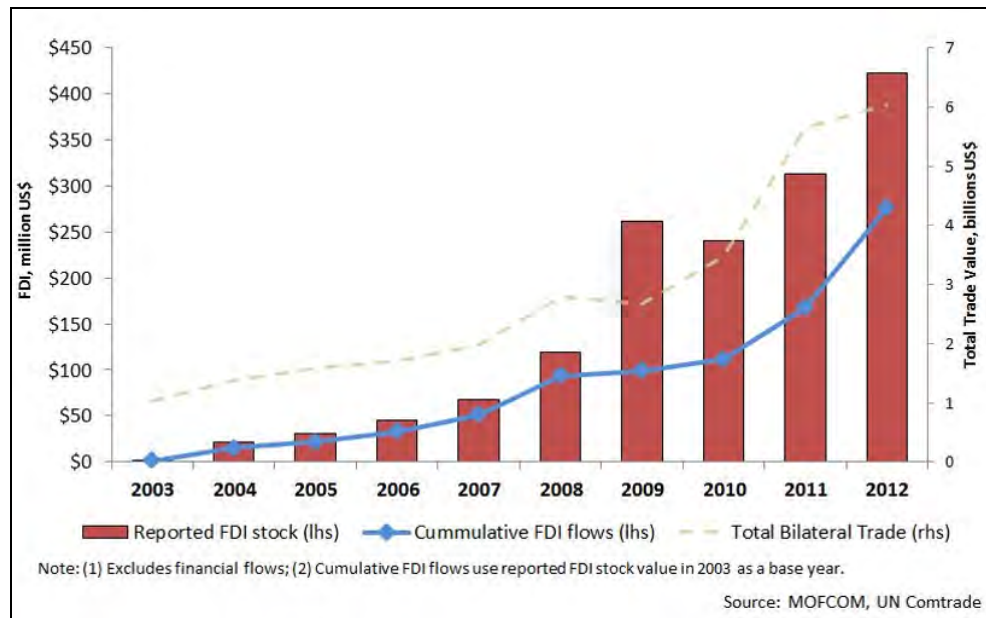


Figure 1. China's Foreign Direct Investment in North Korea, Stocks and Flows

Source: Stephan Haggard and Weiyi Shi, "Chinese Investment in North Korea: Some Data," Peterson Institute for International Economics, 1 July 2014, accessed 13 May 2015, <http://blogs.piie.com/nk/?p=13265>.

China has backed North Korea politically and diplomatically. China has always tried to shield North Korea from harm, which might lead North Korea to implode or collapse. In the UNSC, China tried to minimize sanctions by supporting moderate sanctions over North Korea. In the UNSC negotiations following North Korea's nuclear test in 2006, many of the fifteen Security Council member states, especially the United States and Japan, wanted the resolution to be based on Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Chapter 7 of the UN Charter allows sanctions and military action on the causes of threat to the peace and stability of the world. Beijing blocked the inclusion of Chapter 7 in

UNSC 1718.¹⁴² Beijing only agreed to UNSC Resolution 1718 after it removed requirements for tough economic sanctions.

In 2009, Beijing seemed to show less interest in going beyond a minimalist interpretation of UNSC Resolution 1874's provisions.¹⁴³ Chinese oppositions prevented the sanctions committee from meeting for much of the first half of 2010. Additionally, after the sinking of *Cheonan*, China appeared to protect North Korea. China sought to avoid any linkage between sanctions and the *Cheonan* incident. China also did not enforce the UNSC sanctions of prohibition to export luxury goods to North Korea. China's export of luxury goods to North Korea generally continued to rise after each UNSC resolution. China's export of luxury goods to North Korea increased from \$136.1 million in 2008 to \$146.8 million in 2009 after the passing of UNSC Resolution 1874.¹⁴⁴ China was also reluctant to conduct search North Korean's cargo ships. The seaborne cargo of North Korean arms that was seized in Dubai in July 2009 had visited several Chinese ports and was transported from Dalian, China, to Shanghai aboard a Chinese ship, without Chinese efforts to search the ship.¹⁴⁵

China also showed its support by persuading other countries to be more lenient toward North Korea. On the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1874, Chinese Ambassador,

¹⁴² Jaewoo Choo, 371.

¹⁴³ There are several key provisions in UNSC 1874: a ban on the export of luxury goods to North Korea, authorization for member states to inspect North Korean cargo ships, encouraging North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks, and extending an arms embargo by banning all weapons exported from the country and most imports.

¹⁴⁴ Chongsik Lee, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Zhang Yesui, stressed that diplomatic means should be employed rather than merely imposing sanctions and the resolution should not adversely impact the country's development, or humanitarian assistance to it. In addition, during Kim Jong-il's three visits to meet Hu Jintao in May 2011, China used the occasion to demonstrate North Korea's sincere willingness to return to Six-Party Talks. China intended to urge South Korea and the United States to change their containment policy regarding North Korea.¹⁴⁶ Without China, the sanctions imposed on North Korea would be more punitive and there is a possibility of the use of military force against North Korea by UNSC resolution adherence to Chapter 7 of UN Charter.

The third North Korean loss would be security and military backing from China. China is obliged to come to North Korea's aid by all necessary means in case of third party military attack according to Article 2 of the PRC-North Korea treaty of friendship regarding mutual defense. However, along with changes in China's strategic interest, their interpretation of Article 2 has also changes. In the Jiang Zemin era, China stressed that Article 2 does not necessarily means China would automatically and immediately comes to North Korea's aid in the case of war. China is only obliged to defend North Korea against unprovoked aggression; it has the right to make an authoritative interpretation of the principle of intervention in the treaty. China's ambiguity in its principal of intervention is enough to deter others from taking military actions against

¹⁴⁶ Jae Cheol Kim, "China-DPRK's Special Relationship of Convenience," *East Asia Forum*, 5 July 2011, accessed 21 April 2015, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/07/05/china-dprk-s-special-relationship-of-convenience/>.

Pyongyang.¹⁴⁷ As an old Chinese proverb goes, if you want to hit a dog you have to mind the master.

Prospects of Future Change in PRC-DPRK Relations

Are China and North Korea unlikely to abandon their alliance in the future? If not, what conditions would enable such changes?

First, in the short-term, as long as the current structure of the two Koreas and the U.S.-China competition continue, the possibility of abandoning their alliance would be low. However, from the long-term view, a return of the kind of strong PRC-DPRK relationship from year past (i.e., Cold War Era) is hard to imagine. In particular, for the time being DPRK's role as China's strategic benefits will persist unless fundamental changes occur in DPRK itself.

For its own geopolitical interests and domestic and regional stability, Beijing has played a generally positive role in Korean affairs, not only providing necessary economic support to the DPRK, but also making it clear to Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo that it is now in the common interest of all to promote the peaceful coexistence of the two Korean states on the peninsula rather than having to cope with the turmoil, chaos, and probable massive exodus of refugees that would follow in the wake of system collapse in the DPRK.¹⁴⁸

In addition, China has plenty of reasons not to allow a crisis to grow out of control. Since the mid-1970s and certainly during the post-Cold War era, a fundamental

¹⁴⁷ Jaewoo Choo, 371.

¹⁴⁸ Samuel Kim, "China and North Korea in a Changing World," *Asia Prograspecial*, no. 115 (September 2003): 16-17.

feature of China's policy toward the Korean Peninsula has been the maintenance of the status quo. If any transformation in the region were to happen, China would prefer it to happen through negotiations between the two Koreas and through international diplomacy involving Beijing as a main East Asian power. China's leaders need the DPRK to serve as China's strategic buffer on its northeastern border, and need a stable and peaceful environment in East Asia that will help promote China's plans of economic modernization. Therefore, China certainly has a strong desire to help resolve the Korean Peninsula's upcoming problems.¹⁴⁹

However, a point of view that only the DPRK is depending on the treaty should be excluded. For example, the DPRK has shown doubts about the authenticity of the alliance. DPRK seems to expect that China cannot fully support the DPRK's understanding of the mediation role in multilateral negotiations.¹⁵⁰ In addition, during the High-Level Talks between the DPRK-United States in early 1992, Kim Jongil revealed an interesting expression:

We sent Secretary Kim Yong-Soon to the U.S. as a special envoy. Through him, we told the U.S. that we would not fight with the ROK. Then we asked that the U.S. troops remain in the ROK to help prevent fighting between the North and the South. We explained the numerous historical instances of foreign invasions because of the geopolitical interests of our big neighboring powers. We told them that in view of the power dynamics of Northeast Asia, the U.S. military presence would contribute to the maintenance of peace on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Jian Chen, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance," 10.

¹⁵⁰ Byeong-Gwang Park, "PRC-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty' and the ROK-U.S. Alliance" (Report, Institute for National Security Strategy, Seoul, 1 September 2011), 74.

¹⁵¹ Dong-won Lim, *Peace Maker: Twenty years of Inter-Korean Relations and the North Korean Nuclear Issue* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 53.

In July 2000, at the Summit of two Koreas, Kim said: It is desirable that the American troops continue to stay on the Korean Peninsula and he sent a high-level envoy to the U.S. to deliver this position to the American side.¹⁵² In October of the same year, speaking after the talks between President Kim and Madeleine Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, a senior U.S. State Department official said there had been some progress on the idea of Washington helping the DPRK to develop its own satellite launch capacity. Mrs. Albright said, “It is important that we work to overcome the enmities of the past and focus on a brighter future for our peoples.”¹⁵³

However, such a rapprochement atmosphere would not be in line with China’s security interests. China will not be ruled out in international discussions for solving problems of the Korean Peninsula. China wants to have a leading role in the process of Korean problem solving. In addition, the DPRK has been a long-standing headache for China. This is not the first time since the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949 that they find themselves in a difficult international quandary over the behavior of their erstwhile comrades in the DPRK. Ever since Kim Il-sung’s forces invaded the South in 1950, China has repeatedly found its own national security interests affected and compromised by the provocative and confrontational policies pursued by the Kim dynasty and Pyongyang regime.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Doug Struck, “South Korean Says North Wants U.S. Troops to Stay,” *Washington Post*, 30 August 2000.

¹⁵³ BBC News, “Korean Missile Breakthrough,” 24 October 2000, accessed 28 April 2015, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/988367.stm>.

¹⁵⁴ David L. Shambaugh, “China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term,” *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2003): 43-56.

China's real leverage is DPRK's economic dependence upon China. However, this certainly does not mean that China's leaders are in a position to impose certain policy decisions upon the DPRK at will. In actuality, China's leaders are facing a major dilemma in this regard: if they do not apply economic means, it is likely that their voice will go unheard by Pyongyang's ears; but if they do use economic means—such as cutting off China's aid—this might backfire, and in the worst case scenario, might even cause DPRK's economic and societal collapse and thus result in a huge blow to China's own interests. Therefore, China will have to act cautiously in designing and implementing its policies toward DPRK using the treaty as a fundamental tool. It seems that China is yet to develop a satisfactory strategy to cope with this dilemma.¹⁵⁵

China's Korean policy is ad hoc due very much to the unpredictability of Kim Jong-eun's regime. It has to readjust its approach constantly. However, on the whole, China's desire on maintaining the status-quo, aversion to war, and regime survival has remained unchanged. Therefore, these policies will remain constant for the foreseeable future unless a failed political succession in China occurs or a large-scale armed reaction from U.S. and its Allied Forces provokes a policy change in Beijing. In addition, China faces a huge dilemma concerning its handling of the DPRK. Because of the aforementioned reasons, China is likely to stick to its current passive DPRK policies, while creating conditions and preparing for any future change, gradual or sudden. There

¹⁵⁵ Jian Chen, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance," 10.

is no doubt that PRC-DPRK relations are in flux. Sooner rather than later, China has to formulate an alternative vis-à-vis DPRK and it is actually in search of a better option.¹⁵⁶

Implications for ROK's National Security

Over the past decade, the relationship between ROK and China has completely transformed; it is now one of the strongest in the East Asian region. At least, in the business community, China's strategy for building ties with the South is born not only of economic motives but also of strategic calculations. Since the rapprochement more than a decade ago, China has realized that it would have little leverage in shaping the eventual outcome of the divided Korean Peninsula if it did not enjoy strong ties with South Korea. Such ties would also serve to offset any potential threat from the U.S.-ROK alliance and from U.S. forces on the peninsula. China's strategy has been a net success, but both sides have reaped benefits. Both countries consult with and support each other about strategy toward the DPRK. Both governments favor engagement with the North, a reformist North Korea, and eventual peaceful unification. Both governments strongly oppose DPRK's weapons of mass destruction development, withdrawal from the Agreed Framework and the IAEA safeguards program, and otherwise belligerent behavior. In sum, China's entire approach to South Korea over the past decade has been motivated by four main factors: as a hedge against regime collapse in the North and/or potential unification of North and South Korea; as an astute economic investment; as a key component of its proactive

¹⁵⁶ You Ji, Working Paper, No.229, "Dealing with the North Korea Dilemma: China's Strategic Choices" (Paper, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 21 June 2011), 32-33.

peripheral diplomacy; and as a strategic ploy to gain long-term influence over the Korean Peninsula.¹⁵⁷

However, recently, some Chinese scholars have claimed that China's DPRK policies must be approached in line with the Korean unification.¹⁵⁸ To ensure this goal, China must develop economic relations with the DPRK and utilize this momentum as not only a driving force for growth in China, but also establishing a PRC-DPRK relationship that is more predictable in the long term by encouraging DPRK reform and opening as China experienced. There are even suggestions that peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula is the ideal scenario for China's development, and that it may be advantageous to use the entire Korean Peninsula as a buffer zone for China. This would require normalization of the DPRK through stronger relations with China, as well as improved relations with the ROK, and stronger strategic communication with the United States.¹⁵⁹

Obviously, China has a visionary approach to manage the DPRK problems and this ambiguity has become reason for considerable controversy within the ROK aweing those who are concerned with its Chinese policy. The ROK should look squarely at China's approach. The first approach is one that ideally focuses on the stability of the DPRK region, the softening of the DPRK regime, and mutually beneficial relations. This position is that a long-term platform for strategic cooperation with China is necessary. However, the second approach is, while change in China's perception of the DPRK may

¹⁵⁷ Shambaugh, 43-56.

¹⁵⁸ Myeong-hae Choi, 66.

¹⁵⁹ Jin Qiangyi, "Resolving the Issue of Korean Peninsula: Prospects for China's North Korea Strategy Method, Prospective, and Path Selection," *Northeast Asia Forum*, no. 2 (2012): 47-56.

be clear, a real change of its DPRK policy would be difficult to see. In reality, the instability of the DPRK, and the uncertainty surrounding the international political circumstances of Northeast Asia combined with the strategic rivalry structure between the United States and China, will continuously affect the strategic policy decisions of China. From a realistic perspective, this may seem a selfish attempt by China to expand its influence on the Korean Peninsula. It could be the possibility of deepening mistrust between the ROK and China in the future.¹⁶⁰

China's strategic approach towards the Korean Peninsula strongly conflicts with the U.S. national interest rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. The United States has transferred its world strategic keynote to the pivot of Asia for containment against the rapid rise of China, and this brought the need for strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance in the U.S. point of view. This strategic rivalry structure between the United States and China will impose a difficult choice to South Korea between U.S. security value and PRC's economic value in solving North Korea problem. How can ROK overcome the dilemma by verifying U.S.-China confrontation conditions correspond to the dilemma in Korea? First, safely managing North and South Korea's relations not to cause clashes between the United States and China is important. Secondly, displaying strategic flexibility to develop strategic partnership with China based on ROK-U.S. alliance. Third, it is needed to construct a multi-security cooperation structure in Northeast Asia area to escape from a certain side's imperative influence. Korea also needs to endeavor to reinforce independent security capability.

¹⁶⁰ Ding Feng, "Hu Jintao Meets with ROK President Lee Myung-bak," Xinhuaawang, 26 March 2012, accessed 1 May 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2012-03/26/c_111703307.htm.

It is still unclear whether the Kim Jong-eun regime will respond positively to China's new approach. DPRK certainly will feel the need to make some gesture corresponding to China's interests in order to procure the minimal amount of outside material goods needed to secure its power succession and solidarity of power. However, there is also a possibility of the DPRK moving away from China's interests, in the event that discord occurs in the process of economic aid and cooperation between DPRK and China.

If China continues to be parsimonious in providing development aid to the DPRK as it struggles to establish its power succession, then the possibility of the DPRK engaging in more provocations and drifting away from China's interests is possible.¹⁶¹ This is the most significant dilemma for China in its economic cooperation with the DPRK.

China may be North Korea's leading trade partner and may supply North Korea with the most foreign aid, but Beijing's coercive potential is restricted by two factors that are often overlooked. Firstly, Beijing is not North Korea's sole source of trade and foreign aid; North Korea has shown to be highly capable of drawing revenue from other sources while surviving through harsh economic conditions in the meantime. Secondly,

¹⁶¹ The Chinese Ministry of Commerce estimates that China's investment in the DPRK reached 12.14 million dollars in 2010. This is merely third percent of the amount reached in 2008 (forty-one million dollars) when Chinese investment peaked. In 2010, Chinese investment in the DPRK was merely 0.017 percent of China's total direct foreign investment. Considering Kim Jong-il's efforts to promote economic cooperation through frequent visits to China right before his death, it is noteworthy that China's actual direct investment in the DPRK is much smaller than expected. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, "Bi-weekly Analysis of Chinese Politics," Republic of Korea, June 2011, accessed 15 May 2015, http://www.mofa.go.kr/search/search_eng.jsp?searchData=Chinese%20politics, 4.

North Korea has made it evident that it is highly aware of its strategic importance to China and has thus used this knowledge to gain the upper hand in counteracting China's economic leverage through the constant use of brinkmanship. Hence, although China may hold significant influence over North Korea, China does not have full-reigned influence as it was once believed unless China changes its priorities and chooses to abandon the Kim regime. For China, the DPRK remains a strategic burden and an uncertain neighbor rather than a mutually beneficial partner. In addition, taking leadership in its bilateral relations and promoting changes in the DPRK seems like it is still beyond its capabilities. Therefore, when formulating their strategies towards dealing with North Korea, the United States, ROK, and other relevant actors, they should not act under the assumption that China can control North Korea. China's strategic choices for the Korean Peninsula will remain contingent to the ROK upon very complex and dynamic circumstances for a long time to come. Entangled with the circumstances of the ROK domestic politics, these issues will spark more social controversy concerning the strategic status of the ROK in relation to the United States and China.

Areas for Further Research

While China's strategic priorities in North Korea remain unchanged now, eventually China could reach a tipping point in which it abandons the DPRK. Although it is impossible to predict exactly when this tipping point will come, ultimately China will have to decide whether backing Pyongyang truly helps to support China's core interests. Were China to surmise that it could achieve greater economic benefits without the Kim regime in power, perhaps China would be willing to re-evaluate its stance. Furthermore,

ever focused on its own security, Beijing could choose to abandon North Korea if this continued support leads China to feel threatened by other regional powers.

While China is concerned about its security in relation to all major power in East Asia, the North Korea nuclear and long-range missile situation could particularly impact China's relationship with Japan. If Japan were to develop nuclear weapons and increase military capability in response to North Korea threat, it is plausible that Beijing may re-evaluate its priorities. A nuclear-armed Japan would be seen as an intolerable threat to China's dominance in East Asia. Especially after the return of the Nationalist Shinso Abe government in Japan, it is possible that further nuclear provocation from North Korea could lead Japan to seek to increase its military power include developing its own nuclear weapons. Further research is needed to see if North Korea's nuclear weapon development program could spur a commensurate response in Japan (i.e., Japan building its own nuclear weapons). Furthermore, if this increase in Japanese military power includes building a stronger alliance with the United States, this may spur a change in China's strategic priorities in North Korea.

Finally, further research is needed to assess the potential implications of Chinese economic abandonment of North Korea. The existing literature largely assumes that the Kim Jong-eun regime could not survive if China were to withdraw its economic support from North Korea. Given the enormity of China's economic involvement in North Korea, this appears on the surface to be quite a reasonable assumption. However, many analysts similarly predicted that the Kim regime would surely collapse following the withdrawal of Soviet Union's economic support in the early 1990s, and yet the regime survived. There is no way to predict with absolute certainty how the Kim regime would fare

without Chinese support. Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of the implications of Chinese economic abandonment of North Korea would be quite useful for future study on the PRC-DPRK relationship.

APPENDIX A

PRC-NORTH KOREA TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION

AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE, 11 JULY 1961

The Chairman of the PRC and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK, determined, in accordance with Marxism-Leninism and the principle of proletarian internationalism and on the basis of mutual respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and mutual assistance and support, to make every effort to further strengthen and develop the fraternal relations of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between the PRC and the DPRK, to jointly guard the security of the two peoples, and to safeguard and consolidate the peace of Asia and the world, and deeply convinced that the development and strengthening of the relations of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the two countries accord not only with the fundamental interests of the two peoples but also with the interests of the peoples all over the world, have decided for this purpose to conclude the present treaty and appointed as their respective plenipotentiaries:

The Chairman of the PRC: Zhou Enlai, Premier of the State Council of the PRC.

The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK: Kim Il-sung, Premier of the Cabinet of the DPRK.

Who, having examined each other's full powers and found them in good and due form, have agreed upon the following:

Article I

The Contracting Parties will continue to make every effort to safeguard the peace of Asia and the world and the security of all peoples.

Article II

The Contracting Parties undertake jointly to adopt all measures to prevent aggression against either of the Contracting Parties by any state. In the event of one of the Contracting Parties being subjected to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal.

Article III

Neither Contracting Party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other Contracting Party or take part in any bloc or in any action or measure directed against the other Contracting Party.

Article IV

The Contracting Parties will continue to consult with each other on all important international questions of common interest to the two countries.

Article V

The Contracting Parties, on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and in the spirit of friendly co-operation, will continue to render each other every possible economic and technical aid in the cause of socialist construction of the two countries and will continue to consolidate and develop economic, cultural, and scientific and technical co-operation between the two countries.

Article VI

The Contracting Parties hold that the unification of Korea must be realized along peaceful and democratic lines and that such a solution accords exactly with the national interests of the Korean people and the aim of preserving peace in the Far East.

Article VII

The present Treaty is subject to ratification and shall come into force on the day of exchange of instruments of ratification, which will take place in Pyongyang. The present Treaty will remain in force until the Contracting Parties agree on its amendment or termination. Done in duplicate in Peking on the eleventh day of July, nineteen sixty-one, in the Chinese and Korean languages, both texts being equally authentic.¹⁶²

¹⁶² The People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

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